





Class BX 9178

Book .B35P7

PRESENTED BY

1895

---







PRACTICAL  
S E R M O N S :

DESIGNED FOR

VACANT CONGREGATIONS AND FAMILIES.

BY

ALBERT BARNES.



PHILADELPHIA:  
PERKINS & PURVES, 142 CHESTNUT STREET.

.....

1845.

BX 9178

.B35 P7

1845

---

ENTERED according to Act of Congress, in the year 1841, by

ALBERT BARNES,

in the Office of the Clerk of the District Court of the Eastern District of  
Pennsylvania.

---

*Gift*  
*Mrs. Alice F. Stevens*  
*Sept. 24, 1931*

## P R E F A C E.

THE title of this volume sufficiently indicates its design. It is published, because it is supposed that there is a want of such sermons constantly occurring. There are numerous congregations in this country, which, unhappily, have not the regular preaching of the gospel, and in which, in order to maintain public worship, it is necessary to make use of printed sermons. It is not supposed that these are *better* sermons than have before been published for such an object, but that there might be an advantage in having a greater variety; and that an interest might exist in behalf of those recently published which could not be excited for even a better volume that has been frequently perused. There are not a few families, also, it is supposed, which would be interested in a volume of sermons, and in which, it is hoped, good might be done by their perusal.

The discourses in this volume are wholly practical. They were intended to be such as would be adapted to impress on the mind the importance and necessity of personal religion, and to urge the necessity of a holy life, as the first great duty of man. There are no sermons in the volume which professedly discuss the doctrines of Christianity; and no sentiments are intended to be advanced which would offend evangelical Christians of any denomination. The appeals, illustrations, and arguments to a holy life, are based on the supposition of the truth of the evangelical doctrines; but it was no part of the plan to discuss those doctrines, or to make them prominent. I may be permitted, perhaps, to say, in justice to myself, that, my usual manner of preaching to my own congregation is much more doctrinal in its character than the perusal of these sermons might lead a reader to suppose. These are intentionally *selected* for their practical character.

ALBERT BARNES.

Washington Square, Philadelphia,

June 16th, 1841.

# CONTENTS.

---

	Page
SERMON I. <i>The Freeness of the Gospel</i> .....	7
Rev. xxii. 17. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.	
SERMON II. <i>The Love of God in the Gift of a Saviour</i> .....	25
John iii. 16. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.	
SERMON III. <i>Why will ye die?</i> .....	41
Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?	
SERMON IV. <i>The Deceitfulness of the Heart</i> .....	58
Jer. xvii. 9. The heart is deceitful above all things.	
SERMON V. <i>Indecision in Religion</i> .....	75
1 Kings xviii. 21. And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.	
SERMON VI. <i>The Reasons why Men are not Christians</i> . .....	89
Luke xiv. 18. I pray thee have me excused.	
SERMON VII. <i>The Misery of forsaking God</i> .....	103
Jer. ii. 13. My people have committed two evils;—they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.	
SERMON VIII. <i>God is worthy of Confidence</i> .....	116
Job xxii. 21. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace.	
SERMON IX. <i>Repentance</i> .....	132
Acts xvii. 30. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.	
SERMON X. <i>Salvation Easy</i> .....	148
Matt. xi. 30. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light	
SERMON XI. <i>The Principles on which a Profession of Religion should be made. No. 1</i> .....	164
2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.	



	Page
SERMON XII. <i>The Principles on which a Profession of Religion should be made. No. 2.....</i>	181
2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.	
SERMON XIII. <i>Enemies of the Cross of Christ. No. 1..</i>	193
Phil. iii. 18. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.	
SERMON XIV. <i>Enemies of the Cross of Christ. No. 2..</i>	208
Phil. iii. 18. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.	
SERMON XV. <i>Enemies of the Cross of Christ. No. 3....</i>	221
Phil. iii. 18, 19. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction.	
SERMON XVI. <i>The Rule of Christianity, in regard to Conformity to the World.....</i>	234
Rom. xii. 2. And be not conformed to this world.	
SERMON XVII. <i>The Blessings of a Benignant Spirit... </i>	252
Col. iii. 12. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God—kindness.	
SERMON XVIII. <i>Secret Prayer .....</i>	266
Matt. vi. 6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.	
SERMON XIX. <i>The Sabbath.....</i>	281
Ex. xx. 8. Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.	
SERMON XX. <i>Secret Faults .....</i>	296
Psalm xix. 12. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.	
SERMON XXI. <i>Preparation to meet God.....</i>	311
Amos iv. 12. Prepare to meet thy God.	
SERMON XXII. <i>The Burden of Dumah .....</i>	325
Isa. xxi. 11, 12. The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night.—If ye will enquire, enquire ye. Return, come.	
SERMON XXIII. <i>The Harvest Past.....</i>	342
Jer. viii. 20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.	

# PRACTICAL SERMONS.

---

## SERMON I.

### THE FREENESS OF THE GOSPEL.

Rev. xxii. 17. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

THE obvious sentiment of this beautiful passage of Scripture is, that the offers of salvation are made freely to all men, and that the invitation is to be pressed on the attention by all the means which can be employed. To this sentiment, I propose at this time to invite your attention.

The figure of "the water of life" which John employs in the text, is one that often occurs in the Scriptures to represent the mercy of God towards mankind. Thus Isaiah (xxxv. 6) in speaking of the times of the Messiah says, "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water." And again (xli. 18), "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the vallies: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." And again (lv. 1), "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." The idea in all these passages is, that the blessings of the gospel would resemble fountains and running streams; as if in the solitary, sandy desert, streams of water, pure, refreshing, and ample, should suddenly break forth, and should fill the desolate plains with verdure, and should gladden

the heart of the fainting traveller,—streams of which each coming caravan might partake without money and without charge. In a world which in regard to its real comforts is not unaptly compared to a waste of pathless sands, the blessings of the gospel would burst forth like cooling, perennial fountains; and man like a weary and thirsty pilgrim might partake and be happy,—as the traveller sits down by such a fountain and slakes his thirst in the desert.

In the text, however, the particular idea is, that men are freely invited to partake of the blessings of salvation. They are invited by the Holy Spirit, and by the bride—the church—to come. So free is salvation that even he who hears of it may go and say to kindred and friend, ‘come.’ They who thirst may come:—they who are pressed down by the consciousness of the want of something like this to make them happy, who are satisfied that happiness can nowhere else be found, who thirst for salvation under the consciousness of sin, and the feeling that the “world can never give the bliss for which they sigh,” are invited to come; and all who choose may come and partake freely of the waters of life.—John saw in vision (ch. xxii. 1) “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.” To that pure and clear river of salvation, men are invited to come freely. There they may slake their thirst. There the desires of the immortal mind, where all earthly things fail, may be satisfied.

It is not my purpose in this discourse—though my text might seem to invite to it—to dwell on the fact that the gospel is offered to all men; that the Redeemer died for all; that the Eternal Father is willing to save all; or that ample provision is made for all who will come. On these points, it is sufficient for my present purpose to say, that my text declares that, “whosoever will may take the water of life freely;” that God has elsewhere said, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;” that the Redeemer has said, “come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” It is enough that God has solemnly sworn, “as I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked,

but that the wicked turn from his way and live ;” that it is solemnly declared that Christ “ by the grace of God tasted death for every man ;” that he is “ the propitiation for the sins of the whole world,” and that the Saviour has given the assurance that, “ every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” It would be sufficient to prove this, if there were nothing else, that the Lord Jesus when about to ascend to heaven, said to his disciples, “ Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature—he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” I ask no higher proof that the plan of salvation is adapted to all, and that it contains ample blessings for all. I desire no other argument to show that the doors of heaven are opened wide, and that the Father of mercies waits to save men. I ask no other warrant for making the offer of salvation to as many of the lost children of men as I may ever be enabled to do, or of giving the assurance to man, wherever I may meet him, that God is willing to save him from eternal death.

Taking our high stand, therefore, on these incontrovertible positions, and with these full and free offers of life clearly in view, my desire is, to press the invitation in the text on your attention. I wish to state some of the appeals which the gospel makes to you as individuals. I wish to come to you and reason with you, and show you why you should embrace it ; and I shall be satisfied if I can so vary the form of the invitation that my beautiful text may find its way, as it *ought* to be allowed to, to the heart.

Why then should you embrace the offer of salvation in the gospel ? In what way is this invitation pressed on your attention ? I answer, it is done,

I. In the first place, by your own conviction of the truth and the obligations of religion. I mean that the convictions of the understanding are on the side of religion, and that Christianity makes its appeals to you with the presumption that its claims are seen and known to be right. We come to you, when we preach the gospel, with the assurance that we carry with us the decisions of the understanding, though we may fail in subduing the will or in winning the heart. We come



to you as to those who have no disposition to cavil with the argument for the truth of religion ; who are willing to be numbered among the supporters and the defenders of the gospel ; and who are cherishing the purpose more or less distinctly formed, at some time to be Christians. I refer to facts such as the following.

(1.) You believe that Christianity is true. You admit this as a truth which you are not disposed to controvert, and which you are willing should be understood by your children and friends to be one of the settled truths on which your mind has no doubt. You would be unwilling that a wife, a sister, a child, or a parent, should think otherwise of you than that this is the deliberate conviction of your minds, a conviction in which you purpose to live, and to die. You wish to be understood as having no sympathy with an atheist, an infidel, a scoffer. With them you have not been ranked ; with them you purpose not to be found. When I say this, I mean that it is the conviction of the most of those to whom the gospel is preached. This conviction may be the result of education ; or, it may have arisen from the habit of long and patient reflection ; or, it may have been formed from the observation of the effects of religion on the minds and lives of others ; or, it may be possibly a conviction whose origin you cannot well define ; or, it may have been the result of an extended and patient examination of the evidences of the Christian religion. It is not material to my argument now, what is the origin of it, or by what arguments you would be disposed to maintain it. The *fact* is all that is of importance now ; and that fact is, that the divine origin of Christianity is one of those truths which you do not presume to call in question, and which you do not wish to be understood as doubting. You feel that a part of your reputation is involved in holding the opinion that Christianity is true.

I assume, therefore, that those whom I address at this time are disposed to admit that Christianity is true, and that it has a claim on their hearts, and lives. It is not to be presumed of any man, without proof, that he is an atheist or an infidel, any more than it is, that he is a liar or a murderer. It is not true that the mass of men in any community are infidels or atheists ; nor is it to be presumed of any one that he is an infidel unless he gives

us proof of it that shall be irrefragable in his profession or his life,—proof that would satisfy a court and jury on the point. There is *something* about Christianity which commends it wherever it comes, and wherever its effects are seen, as true, and pure, and good, and adapted to the condition of mankind; and wherever it is long proclaimed it secures the popular voice in its favor, and constrains the intellect, if not the heart of man, to bow before it. As a matter of fact, infidelity is *usually* the work of time and of sin. Men who have been trained under the influence of religion, do not speculatively cast off the authority of God until they have formed a purpose to live in a manner which he forbids. Youth usually adheres to its belief of the truth of religion until it is enticed by the love of sin, or by the seductive arts of aged infidelity. The young are full of sincerity, and openness, and confidence, and they admit the claims of the principles of virtue and religion. We are therefore to look for infidels and atheists, not among the young, and the ingenuous, but among the profligate, the abandoned, the profane and the sensual. These all are infidels as a matter of course. The speculative belief of Christianity and the sanctuary were forsaken together, and infidelity and vice became at the same moment bosom companions.

Now it is to this belief of the truth of Christianity that I make my appeal. The gospel addresses you as if you knew and admitted it to be true, and asks you to “come.” It is not the claim of a new and unknown religion. It is not the voice of a stranger that invites you. It is that in which you have been trained; a religion whose effects you have witnessed from childhood; which has the sanction of a father and mother, and of the best friends which you now have, or have had on earth. It is that whose effects you see in the community around you; whose consolations and sustaining power you may have often witnessed in trial; nay, whose hopes and joys you may have seen exemplified on the death-bed of your most beloved friend. It simply asks you, in a barren world, to embrace consolation which you know to have an existence; to take the waters of life which you believe flow freely for all; to come to a Saviour who you

believe poured out his precious blood that you might live forever.

I know it may be said that this is the work of education, and that I am appealing to a mere prejudice. But I reply, that it is not with all a mere prejudice, nor does the argument which I urge preclude the supposition of the most close and patient examination. I argue from the admitted truth of Christianity on whatever ground that may be conceded. But suppose that it is the result of education, I would observe that there *are* opinions and principles that have been inculcated by education that constitute a just ground of appeal. To what in most instances will you trace the felt and conceded obligation of truth, of chastity, of honesty, of patriotism, of modesty, but to the influences of education? Are they valueless because they have been instilled with parental care from the cradle? Shall they be rejected and despised because they thus depend on lessons that have been inculcated with anxious solicitude from very childhood? Or is it, and should it not be presumptive proof of their value, that they are the lessons which a venerated father has taught; that they are the sentiments of a much loved mother; that they are virtues which give ornament and grace to a sister, and that they command the assent of the community at large? He walks safely who walks in the ways of virtue; he cannot greatly err who desires to please his Maker and to live for heaven.

(2.) Again. Religion appeals to you not only by its admitted truth, but by your own reason. This is what I mean. Your reason is always on the side of God and of his claims. It always approves the service of God, no matter how soon that service is begun, and no matter with what self-denial and fidelity it is performed. It always condemns the opposite, no matter how plausibly the neglect of God may be urged, and no matter what may be the apparent and temporary pleasure found in the ways of sin. Reason never lends its voice in favor of atheism, or scepticism, or the neglect of religion, or sensuality, or crime. It is too faithful to the God who has formed the human understanding, and who has made it capable of pronouncing on truth and duty. There is not one of the subjects which reason investigates that does not utter a



loud and distinct voice in favor of virtue, of religion, and of God. There is not a star, however faint or obscure ; not a comet, however remotely it may travel ; not a petal of a flower or an insect's wing ; not a fibre of a muscle or a nerve, that does not rebuke all the feelings of the atheist and the scoffer. There is not a ray of light or a dew drop ; not a living thing or a grain of sand that can be made tributary to the argument of the atheist. And there is not one solitary consideration which reason can suggest that will justify the neglect of God, and the concerns of the soul for a single moment. I am sure that, whatever may be the *feelings* of my hearers, I always have their understanding with me when I urge on them the claims of God. I never speak to men in the name of my Master without the utmost assurance that their reason approves of all that I urge from the Bible, and that it *would* approve their course should they one and all at once become decided Christians. If you doubt this, show me one man who in his sober reflections ever regretted his having become a Christian. Point me to one even in the flames of martyrdom, or on a bed of death, or in a career of prosperity, who regretted that he had so soon or so entirely given himself to the service of God. Tell me of one whose reason, when the sober moment of death approached, condemned him for having sought to live to the honor of God ; or tell me of one—yes, even one, who has left the most gay and splendid circles of life ; who has gone from the scenes of brilliant but hollow pleasure to the cross ; who has given up the world for Christian duties and self-denials however arduous, who ever yet regretted it. No, that Christian remains yet to be found who has left a gay and a wicked world, and has chosen the service of God, who has for one moment regretted the choice, and whose whole soul has not approved the most self-denying service in the cause of the Redeemer. And I am certain, my hearers, that I now have your reason in favor of the appeal which I make that you would come and take the water of life. I am certain, and so are you, that should you one and all hear this appeal, there can be no period in all your future being when your reason would not approve the deed. No, come honor or dishonor ; good report or evil report ;

poverty or wealth ; sickness or health ; storms and tempests, or calms and sunshine ; come life or death ; come calamity when and where it may, you would bless God that you had resolved to drink of the water of the river of life.

(3.) Equally clear is it that the *conscience* is on the side of religion and the claims of God. I am always sure that it is in my favor when I urge the law and the claims of my Maker. I am sure that it is never at peace until peace is found in the gospel. The Christian has always a calm and an approving conscience in view of the fact that he has become a Christian. He has no misgivings. He has no feeling at any time that he has done wrong in doing it. He cannot have ; he never will have. But the sinner never has an approving conscience in view of the fact that he lives in the neglect of religion. He may be callous and insensible, but that is not to have an approving conscience. Nor will his conscience ever approve the neglect of religion, or give him peace for having refused to come and drink of the proffered water of life.

Here then is the first reason which I urge, or the first ground of my appeal to-day. It is an appeal drawn from your admission of the truth of Christianity ; from your understanding, and from the monitions of your own conscience. By these, Christianity urges you to return to God. By these, it presses its claims on your attention. It is no stranger that pleads, no foreigner, no religion of doubtful nature or doubtful claims. You admit its truth ; you admit its claims ; your conscience responds to its demands. Yielding, you would follow the dictates of your own understanding ; embracing it, you would do that which you *know* your own conscience would forever approve.

II. In the second place, it is urged upon your attention and acceptance, by your wants and necessities. You need such a religion. It is adapted to the immortal mind thirsting for happiness, and you are conscious that some such system as that of the gospel alone can meet those immortal desires. My position is, that such are the obvious wants of men that they are conscious that they need some such salvation as the gospel furnishes and offers to them.

(1.) I mean that when a man honestly looks at his own heart and life he is conscious of depravity, and feels his

need of the pardoning mercy of God, and that this sense of the need of pardon should lead him to embrace this plan which proposes forgiveness. That the heart is depraved and polluted is, I presume, at some period of life, the conviction of every man. Never do I urge a doctrine of the Bible that I am more sure commends itself to every one of my hearers, than when I preach the doctrine of depravity, and when I appeal to themselves for the consciousness of its truth. There are moments when the most hardened, and gay, and thoughtless have some misgivings that all is not right, and that their lives are such as to expose them to the displeasure of God. There are moments when there is pensiveness, sadness, melancholy ; when somehow the remembrance of guilt troubles the soul ; when sins long since forgotten seem to come in groups and clusters as if conjured up by some magic wand ; when the whole sky seems overcast with a gathering tempest ; and when there is a fearful apprehension that all that the Bible has said about sin, and woe, and a judgment to come, is true. At one time it may be a momentary conviction coming over the complacencies of the heart, and the joyous scenes of life, like a dark cloud flying suddenly over the disk of the sun, and that soon passes away. At another it is like the gentle and quiet shades of an evening settling on the mind, on which the sun does not rise for weeks and months, leaving the soul in long and distressing sadness. At another it is like a tempest that rolls, and flashes, and thunders along the sky. At another it is like a dense and dark night—a night without moon or stars, and where the soul is involved in impenetrable gloom.

Now the gospel appeals to men by this conscious need of pardon. Man wants peace. He wants light. He wants forgiveness. And the gospel comes and professes its readiness to extend forgiveness, and to furnish relief for a mind thus darkened and sad. Man is conscious that he is a sinner ; and when he feels that, I ask no other proof that the gospel is a scheme fitted to him than to be permitted to go to him in that state, and to tell him that through that plan, those sins though like scarlet may be white as snow ; though red like crimson, that they may



be as wool. The gospel then meets man as running streams and fountains that break forth in the desert, do the caravan; and is as much fitted to that dark and benighted soul as such fountains are to the fainting traveller there.

(2.) I mean further, that when men look at the trials of life, they feel the need of some system like that of the gospel that shall be fitted to give consolation. It is in vain for men to attempt to avoid trial. No strength however great; no plan however wise; no talent however brilliant; no wealth however unbounded; no schemes of pleasure or amusement however skilfully planned, will drive disappointment, and care, and sickness, and pain from our world. Life is after all a weary pilgrimage, and is burdened with many woes. Man's heart is filled with anxiety, and his steps are weary as he walks onward to the grave. Now I mean that man feels the necessity of some balm of life; some alleviation of cares; something that shall perform the friendly office of *dividing* the cares of this world, and that shall put an upholding hand beneath our suffering and exhausted nature. Men seek universally some such comforter and alleviator of care and sorrow, and if they do not find it, life is a weary and wretched journey. One retreats to the academic grove, and seeks consolation in philosophy—in calm contemplation, far away from the bustle and tumult of life. Another goes up the sides of Parnassus, and drinks from the Castalian fount—seeking it in the pursuits of elegant literature, and in the company of the Muses. Another flies to the temple of Mammon and seeks it in the pursuit and possession of gold. Another aims to find it in the brilliant and fascinating world of song and the dance; another in the pursuits of professional life; another in orgies of the god of wine, and the cup that is supposed to drown every care. In *all* these there is a sense of the need of *something* that shall give comfort; something that shall wipe away falling tears; something that shall bind up broken, and pour consolation into heavy hearts. Amidst these things proffering consolation, the gospel also comes, and offers to the weary, the heavy-laden, and the sad, *its* consolations. That also offers support; proposes a plan of wiping away

tears ; of comforting the hearts of the sad, and points the sufferer to the river of life, and asks him to come and take freely—and *never fails*.

(3.) I mean further, that when men look at the *shortness* of life, and at the certainty of death, there is a consciousness that some such system as that of the gospel is needed, and that by this deep consciousness the gospel appeals to men. "We all do fade as a leaf," and we cannot but be conscious that however blooming and vigorous we may now be, the time is not far remote when we shall be cut down as the flower, and wither like the green herb. Our day, even in its highest meridian glory, hastens, as Wolsey said he did, to its setting ; and in spite of all the aid of philosophy, and all the amusements of life, men *will* feel sad at the prospect of death. A death-bed is a melancholy place. The parting with friends forever is a sad and mournful scene. The closing up of all the plans of life, and the starting off on a journey to a dark and unknown world from which "no traveller returns," is an important and a deeply-affecting event. The dying chill ; the clammy sweat ; the fading eye ; the enfeebled delirious mind, are all sad and gloomy things. The coffin is a gloomy abode ; and the grave, for him who has reposed on a bed of down, is a cold and cheerless resting-place. The thought of corruption and decay until the frame, once so beautiful and active, is all gone back to its native dust, is a gloomy thought, and one that should make a deep impression on the human mind.

Now men may blunt the force of these thoughts as much as they can. They may fly from them to business ; to their professions ; to amusement ; to sin—but all will not do. Nature will be true to herself, and true to the designs of God, and it cannot be but that when a man thinks of the grave, there should be a "fond desire," a "longing after immortality." Man would not die forever. He would live again. He would be recovered from that horrid, chilly sleep, from that cold grave, from that repulsive stillness and gloom. There is an *inextinguishable* desire to live again ; a feeling which we can never get rid of, that God did not form the wondrous

powers of mind for the transient pleasures of this brief life. Man feels his need of the hope of heaven; and when the gospel comes to him and invites him to drink of the river of life, and to live forever, he cannot but feel that it is a system adapted to his whole nature, and is just such a system as his circumstances demand. The invitation of the gospel is one that meets all the deep aspirations of his soul, and is just fitted to his condition. It is such as a dying and yet a deathless being ought to desire; it is fitted to meet the woes and sorrows of a wretched world. And all that is in man that is great, all his desire of consolation and of immortal happiness, prompts him to come and take the water of life; and the gospel designs to keep the truth of the guilt and the sorrow of the world before the mind, to induce the sufferer and the sinner to come and embrace pardon and peace.

Thus far I have not adverted to the *direct* invitations of the gospel. I have spoken rather of the character and circumstances of man. I turn now to one other topic, and with that I shall close.

III. I refer, therefore, in the third place, to the special direct invitations in the Scriptures to embrace the gospel. I shall dwell mainly on those referred to in the text, but shall, in a rapid manner, glance at some others also. I observe, then—

That God the Father invites you, and presses the gospel on your attention. On this I need not dwell. If any one doubts that the eternal Father invites men to come to him, and is willing that the wanderer should return, let him ponder the parable of the prodigal son. In that most beautiful and touching of all compositions, how tenderly and pathetically are the feelings of God portrayed in the joy of the aged father when he sees his son afar off; when he goes forth to meet him, and when he greets that long-lost son in an affectionate embrace. With such joy does God the Father come forth to meet the returning sinner; and with such desires does he proffer pardon to the guilty, and a home to the wandering. Open your Bibles. Is there one of the human race, however guilty and wretched, to whom God does not extend the offer of mercy? Is there one who has gone off so far that he is



not invited to return? Is there one who would not be welcomed should he again come back to his Father's house and arms? O, no. There is not one. God, the eternal Father, all along your way has lifted up the voice of invitation and entreaty, and is saying every where and every day to man, "Let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to God, for he will abundantly pardon." My hearer, all along *your* way, from the cradle to the present hour, God the Father has uttered but one voice, the voice of mercy; he has expressed but one wish—it is that you should turn and live. Heaven he has offered you with the fulness of its glory; and by all that is there of peace, and beauty, and bliss; by all that is valuable in his favor and attractive in his own house, he speaks to you and says, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

So has spoken the Son of God. Need I dwell on this? To invite sinners to return, he came forth from the bosom of the Father, and dwelt among men. It was not because he was not happy that he became an exile from the skies; it was not because he did not wear a crown that was brilliant enough, or sway a sceptre over an empire that was not vast enough; it was because here was a race of lost and ruined sinners which might be restored; because they needed some such interposition to save them from eternal ruin. And he came. And what was his life; what was his ministry; what were his sufferings and toils, but unwearied invitations to the guilty and the wretched? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," said he, "if any man will open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Did Christ ever utter a word that expressed an unwillingness that the most guilty and vile should be saved? Did he ever spurn from his presence one broken-hearted and penitent sinner? Lives there a man in all the regions where Christian light illuminates the face of the world, who can doubt for one moment that the Redeemer desires his salvation, and invites him to come and take the water of life freely? No, sinner,



even you know that if you go to him, "all covered o'er" as you may be with crime, he will welcome you, and say, 'Son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.'

So speaks the Holy Ghost. "The Spirit says, come." That sacred Spirit, the Comforter, sent by the ascended Redeemer to awaken, convict, and convert the soul, says "Come," and says so to all. He comes to teach men their need of a Saviour; to acquaint them with their guilt; to guide them to the cross; and all his work on the soul is to impress that short word in the fulness of its meaning on the heart—"COME." To impress that invitation, to lead men to see its value and its power, he visits the heart, and shows it its guilt and its corruptions. For that, he awakens the mind of the careless and the secure in their sins—the pleasure-loving, the gay, the worldly, the ambitious, and shows them the need of a better portion than this life can give. For that, he, in a mysterious manner, makes your mind pensive and sad when in the gay scenes of life, and when flowers seem to be strewed and fragrance to be breathed all around you. For that, he produces the uneasiness of mind when pleasures "pall upon the sense," and when your bosom is conscious of its need of more elevated joys than this world can give. For that, he produces the sense of sadness when you have returned from your daily toils weary with the cares and the disappointments of life; when you have sought and obtained the plaudits of the world, and find all an empty bubble; when a man has built him houses and planted vineyards, and made him gardens and orchards, and gathered silver and gold, the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces, and when vanity of vanities is seen written on them all. To press that invitation to come to the water of life, the Holy Spirit awakens in the heart the sense of sin, and shows you the need of pardon. For that, he convinces you of your past guilt; recalls to your mind the lessons of childhood; makes the mind pensive or sad when you think of death, of God, of the judgment, of eternity. Alike in the still and gentle influences of that Spirit on the mind, and in the terrors of that moment when he overwhelms the soul with the deep consciousness of guilt, the object

is to impress upon the heart the invitation "Come." I said, 'In the still and gentle influences of that Spirit on the mind.' You have seen how the pliant osier bends before the zephyr, and how the harvest field gently waves in a summer's eve. So gently, and often amidst such scenes, too, does the Spirit of God incline the mind to seek better things than this world can give—in heaven. So calm, so sweet, so pure, are those influences which incline the mind to thought, to prayer, to God. I said, 'In the terrors of that moment when he overwhelms the soul with the deep consciousness of guilt.' You have seen the clouds grow dark in the western sky. They roll inward on themselves, and throw their infolding ample volumes over the heavens. The lightnings play, and the thunder rolls, and nature is in commotion, and the tornado sweeps over hill and vale, and the oak crashes on the mountain. So also, and in such scenes, too, the stout-hearted sinner trembles under the influences of the Spirit of God, and in anticipation of the future judgment. He hears the thunder of justice about to condemn him, and sees the lightnings flash ready to devour him. But it is *yet* a scene of mercy. It is not to condemn, it is to warn him. It is a kind messenger sent forth from God—the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the admonisher, whether in the stillness or the storm, saying to the sinner, "Come—take the water of life freely."

So the "bride" says, "Come." But what is this? "I John," said the disciple in Patmos, "saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared *as a bride* for her husband." Rev. xxi. 2. It is the voice of the bride, "the Lamb's wife"—of the church triumphant, the church in heaven, that speaks and invites you to come. It is not merely that the church, by her ministry, her ordinances, and her friends; by her appeals and persuasions in the sanctuary invites—though that is true—it is that the church redeemed; the church in heaven; the church in white robes before the throne; the church now adorned in heaven as a bride, invites you to come. And what is that church that thus invites you? What claims has she on your attention? Why should her voice be heard?—Who compose that church? The church in heaven is composed of those who on earth tried both

religion and the world; and who can now speak from deep experience alike of the trials and the joys of the Christian faith. It is a triumphant church that has been exposed to fiery persecutions, and that has survived them all. A church that has known what it is to be poor and persecuted on earth, and what it is in heaven to be blessed—and that as the result of all now invites you to come and share its triumphs and its joys bought with blood. Whom does the eye of faith see in that church in heaven that invites you? A father may be there; a mother; a sister; a lovely babe. That venerated father, whose cold remains you bedewed with tears, and over whose grave you still go to weep, is there, and says, ‘Come, my son, and take the water of life freely.’ That tender mother, that often spoke to you in childhood of Jesus and of heaven, still says, ‘Come, my daughter, and take the water of life freely.’ That much-loved sister, now clothed in white, and walking beside the river of salvation, says still, ‘Come, my brother, and take the water of life freely.’ That sweet smiling babe stretches out its hands from the world of glory, and speaks and says, ‘Come, father, mother, come and take the water of life freely.’ All that church redeemed—that church made up of prophets, apostles, confessors, martyrs; that church that is now amidst the glories of heaven, still says, ‘Come, there yet is room. Heaven’s ample mansions shall furnish other places of rest. There are harps unstrung which your hands may strike. There are eternal fountains where you may drink. There are blest spirits there that will hail your coming, and rejoice in your joy.’ All heaven invites. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—the one living and one blessed God—says, “Come.” The angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, and all your departed pious kindred, all unite in the invitation, and say, ‘Come, come, and take the water of life freely.’

Need I say that this voice of invitation is echoed back in your ears from this world? So speaks to you a pious father; a tender mother; a sister, a friend. So speak the living to you, and so addresses you the remembered voice of the dead. Go walk among the graves. Beneath your feet, in the sacred sweet slumbers of a Christian’s death, lies a much-loved mother. How still! How lovely



a mother's grave! How the memory delights to go back to the nursery; the fireside; the sick-bed; the anxious care of a mother! How it loves to recall the gentle look; the eye of love; the kiss at night of a mother. She sleeps now in death, but from that grave is it fancy that we still hear a voice, 'My beloved son! my much-loved daughter! Come—come, and take the water of life freely?' No. Of all the departed pious dead; of every living Christian; of all holy beings, there is not one who does not invite you to come. There is not one who would not rejoice in seeing *you* clothed in white, and with palms of victory in your hands in heaven. Yes, in their hearts, and in their eternal dwelling-places there yet is room—room—ample room for all to come.

See now what pleads. The eternal Father; the dying Saviour; the sacred Spirit; all heaven; earth; the grave; conscience; reason; all the universe invites and pleads. And what hinders? A word will tell all. The fear of shame. The love of gaiety. The fascinations of amusement—all temporary, unsatisfactory, dying. A scheme of ambition; a plan of gain; an arrangement for pleasure—all valueless when compared with heaven. For such things the ear is turned away, and the voice inviting to heaven is unheeded. O, how deluded! To suffer the great interests of eternity to be neglected, and the immortal welfare of the soul to be hazarded for nameless trifles! Of the folly of this course I could say much. But why should I say any thing? Who does not see it? I will make, therefore, but one other observation, and then close. THE RIVER OF LIFE WILL ROLL ON FOREVER. Its pure waters, clear as crystal, shall forever gladden and refresh the inhabitants of heaven. But on the banks of that river you may never recline. Far away from that pure stream—far away from all the bliss of heaven—far away from the redeemed and happy throng assembled there, shall be your eternal abode, and never again shall you hear the invitation, "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." To-day, all the universe invites you. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit, say, "Come." The church on earth and the church redeemed say, "Come." The friend that has gone to the skies, and the friend on earth, says, "Come." The tender father;

the affectionate mother ; the pastor ; the brother ; the sister, all say, "Come." Your own nature ; your conviction of the truth ; your sense of sin ; your dread of death ; your inextinguishable desire of immortality ; your conviction that "this world can never give the bliss for which you sigh,"—all these emotions and feelings say, "Come." The whole universe joins in the invitation, and voices from distant worlds mingle in this sanctuary to-day, saying to you now, "Come, take the water of life freely." To-morrow, O how changed may be the scene ! Death's cold fingers may have felt after the strings of life, and chilled them, and your soul may be beyond hope and heaven. Not a voice from all the universe may invite you to leave the dark abodes where the wicked dwell, and to take the waters of life. O that word, 'FREE SALVATION !'—What would you give to hear it borne on the breeze in the world of despair ! But it will be too late. Sealed will be the lips of the eternal Father ; hushed the voice of the Redeemer ; gone the influences of the Holy Spirit. The bride—the church—will have ceased to invite ; and neither father, nor mother, nor brother, nor sister, nor pastor, nor friend, will EVER say to you again, "Come, take the water of life freely."

## SERMON II.

### THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE GIFT OF A SAVIOUR.

John iii. 16. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

THESE are the words of the Redeemer. They express in the briefest space the substance of the gospel. No public speaker ever possessed the power of condensing the great principles of a system of truth into so narrow a compass as the Lord Jesus; and his instructions abound with instances of this condensation. Such declarations were easily treasured up in the memory, and were, therefore, eminently adapted to the end which he had in view—the instruction and salvation of the mass of mankind. The terms of the text require no particular exposition; and we shall proceed at once to the contemplation of the great truths which in so simple language it embodies. It affirms that the origin of the plan of salvation was the love of God; that that love was of the highest degree—leading him to the gift of his only begotten Son; and that it was of the widest extent—embracing the world. We shall consider these points in their order; and shall thus have before us the outlines of the great system of the gospel. I do not suppose that it will be new to you. I have no truths, and perhaps no illustrations, which you have not often contemplated before. I present a system, however, on which, whether it be to you new or old, your eternal welfare depends; and which every consideration of gratitude, of self-interest, of obligation, and of hope, calls on you to embrace and love.

I. The first proposition is, that the plan of salvation originated in the love of God. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” This idea, so simple in appearance, is at the basis of all just views of religion, and strikes far into different systems, and will modify or

control them. The following remarks, in illustration of it, will convey to you the thoughts which I wish to have impressed on your minds.

The idea that God is a God of love, is not one that is very extensively embraced by mankind. Large classes of mankind suppose that if God were a benevolent being, he would have made a world perfectly happy and pure; and the fact that sin and misery so extensively prevail, is, in their view, wholly at war with such a proposition. To them it furnishes no proof of his goodness that he provides remedies and means of deliverance from these evils, but they ask why was not the evil itself prevented, and why was there a necessity for a remedy? A man is sick, and we tell him that the fact that remedies are provided for the various maladies which afflict the body, is a proof of goodness, and he at once turns upon us in a manner which we cannot well meet, and asks why was not the sickness itself prevented? Why was there need of a remedy? Would not higher benevolence have been evinced had pleurisies, and palsies, and fevers, and consumptions been unknown? Why, he asks, was a system formed ever requiring such a device as that of a remedy; why one that needs mending and repairing; why one that was not perfect without the toil and expense of mitigating evils, and repairing wastes? And this man leaves us, after all that we can say, with the feeling that the proof is very imperfect that God is a God of love; and on such a mind the proposition that he so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, falls with little force. He feels, perhaps, in spite of himself, that *back* of all this there is something in the divine bosom that is remote from the proper exercise of love, and that a dying and a suffering world is fitted to neutralize all the argument for benevolence which can be drawn from a remedial system.

On another class of minds the same result is produced by a different train of thought; a train of thought that is sometimes countenanced, I fear, by prevalent views in theology. With such minds the supposition is, that the Bible teaches that God is originally a stern and inexorable being; that the attribute of justice is the central and controlling attribute of his character; that in his nature all



is dark, repulsive, and cold ; that he is indisposed to pardon, unrelenting in his claims, severe in his adjudications, and by nature deaf to the cry of the suffering and the penitent. That sustaining this character, and with these feelings, one more mild and kind than he has consented to become incarnate, and to suffer the unrelenting penalty of the law, in order, as a primary part of his work, to *make* God kind and forgiving. That whatever inclination to mercy there may be now in the character of God, it is the result of purchase ; that he is disposed to bestow only so much pardon as is bought ; that towards a part of the human race, as the result of that purchase, he is now mild and benignant, and that towards the unhappy remainder the original sternness of his character is unmitigated, and that even the sufferings of the atonement have not relaxed the rigidity of his justice in regard to them. The feeling is, that God is now a different being from what he was before the atonement was made, and that he has been *made* mild and forgiving by the sacrifice on the cross.

Now, in opposition to these views, reflecting so much on the character of God, my text teaches that *he was originally disposed to show mercy*. His benevolence in the plan of salvation lies back of the gift of a Saviour, and prompted to it. It was love on the part of the eternal Father that led him to give his Son to die, no less than love on the part of the Son to come—and the one was no more purchased than the other. The gift of the Saviour was just the *expression*, or the *exponent* of that love ; and the magnitude of the gift was the measure of the original love of God. As this idea is the essential thought in my text, and as the view which is taken of it will control all our views of the plan of salvation, I may be permitted to ask your attention to a remark or two to illustrate it.

(1.) We do not suppose that any *change* has been wrought in the character of God by the plan of salvation, or by the work of the atonement. We do not believe that any change could be produced in his character ; we do not believe that it is desirable that there should be. We suppose that God was just as worthy of the love and confidence of his creatures *before* the atonement was

made as he is now, or ever will be ; and that every attribute of his character was just as lovely then as it is now. He is no more merciful now than he was from all eternity ; and he was no more stern in his character then than he is now, and always will be. The incorrigible and the finally impenitent sinner has no more reason to hope for exemption from deserved wrath now than he had before Christ came ; and the angels in heaven gather around him with no more real confidence and love than they did before. The doctrine of the unchangeableness of God is the foundation of all our hopes ; nor could the affairs of the universe move on one moment securely, unless it was exactly true that with God there is “ no variableness or shadow of turning.”

(2.) We suppose that God was originally so full of mercy, and so disposed to pardon sinners, that in order to do it he was willing to stoop to any sacrifice except that of truth and justice, and that therefore he sent his Son to die. The race was *in fact* lost and ruined. The world was full of sinners and full of sufferers. But we do not suppose that compassion towards them has been *purchased*, but that it was originally *so* great that he was willing to stoop to sacrifice in order to rescue and save them.—A father has a beloved son. He embarks on the ocean in the pursuits of commerce, and falls into the hands of an Algerine pirate. He is chained, and driven to the slave market, and sold, and conveyed over burning sands as a slave, and pines in hopeless bondage. The news of this reaches the ears of the father. What will be his emotions ? Will the sufferings of that son make a change in his character ? If required, he would gather up his silver, and his gold, and his pearls, and leave his own home, and cross the ocean, and make his way over the burning sands, that he might find out and ransom the captive. But think you he would be a different man now from what he was ? Has the captivity of that son made a change in him ? No. His sufferings have *called out* the original tenderness of his bosom, and have merely *developed* what he was. He *so* loved that child that the forsaking of his own home, and the perils of the ocean, and the journey over burning sands, were regarded as of no consequence if he could seek out and

save him. These sacrifices and toils would be trifles, if he might again press his lost son to his bosom, and restore him to his desolate home. It is the love—the strong original love in his bosom, that prompts to the sacrifice, and that makes toil and peril welcome. So of God. Such was his original love for man, that he was willing to stoop to any sacrifice to save him; and the gift of a Saviour was the mere expression of that love.

(3.) But now to make this case more analogous to the plan of salvation, and to show more of the real difficulty, suppose the rescue of that child should in some way involve the consequence of doing injustice to others. Suppose it should take the father away from his own family, and expose them to a similar danger. Suppose it should involve the necessity of his acknowledging the right of the captor, or in some way make it necessary to expose his own character to a charge of injustice, or of falsehood—the difficulty in the case would be vastly increased, and the strong love of the father would be more strikingly shown if he should seek to remove *this* difficulty at the same time that he should save his enslaved son. This was the great work which rendered the plan of salvation so difficult and so glorious. It was not merely to save man, but it was at the same time to save the character, and name, and government of God. It was to show that he was “just,” though he “justified the ungodly;” and true, though the sinner should not die. It was to show his sense of the evil of sin, at the same time that he pardoned it; and his truth, at the same time that the threatened penalty was remitted. This could be done only by allowing his son to be treated *as if* he were a sinner, in order to treat the really guilty *as if* they were righteous; and so to *identify* the one with the other, that it might be adjudged that the law was as really satisfied as though they had themselves borne the penalty. It was not merely, therefore, the gift of a Saviour that was the expression of love, it was giving him so as to remove all the obstacles on his part to pardon, and making designed arrangements so as to preserve his own honor untarnished, and to secure the undiminished confidence of the universe.

The essential idea which I have now aimed to exhibit,

is, that the love and mercy of God in the plan of salvation lie *back* of the gift of a Saviour. They are not new attributes which have started up in the divine mind in consequence of the work of redemption. The mercy of God has not been *purchased*, and the character of God has not been changed. God is the same being now that he always was, and he will always remain unchangeably the same. No new attribute has been created; none has been modified. The gift of a Saviour was just the expression of the original and eternal love of God; and is just one of the overflowing manifestations of benevolence in the divine mind. It is not to *make* a change in God; it is not to make an inexorable being mild; it is not to make God more lovely than he was. It is true, that in consequence of this, he *appears* more lovely than he would otherwise have done—since every new development of his character lays the foundation of an increased obligation to love him. But still the essential idea before us is, that he was originally and eternally *disposed* to show mercy; and that the gift of a Saviour was just the *expression* of his love. “He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.”

II. My second object was to show that the expression of his love was the highest that it possibly could be. This is evidently implied in the text: “God *so* loved the world, *that he gave his only begotten Son.*” In illustrating this point, I would observe—

(1.) That such a gift *is* the highest conceivable gift among men, and the Saviour evidently means to say that the same thing is true of God. The Bible is as far as possible from representing God as without feeling or emotion. In the Bible he has the attributes of a tender and kind Father; though in our philosophy and our theology, in our hearts and affections, we make him a different being by far from what he is as revealed to be in the Scriptures. Among men he is esteemed to be a cold and distant being; regardless, to a great extent, of the wants and woes of the race; seated in the far-distant heavens, and unconcerned in what occurs among men; stern, and repulsive, and inapproachable, and severe.—But this is not the God of the Bible. There he is represented as a Father. He is tender, compassionate, and



kind. He loves his creatures though erring; he seeks their welfare though fallen. He is interested for their good; and he makes sacrifices—sacrifices in some proper sense—for their salvation. It is not trope and metaphor merely, when he speaks of himself as a Father, and as a compassionate God. He loves when he says he loves; pities when he says he pities; compassionates when he says he compassionates; and hates when he says he hates. He is the living and the compassionate God—not a cold creation of the imagination; he is a Father—not the repulsive and distant being dreaded if not hated by the stoic.

Now we have no higher conception of the love of a father than that he should give up his son to die. It is the last offering which he could make; and beyond this there is nothing that we can expect. When a man bids his only son go into the tented field, and expose his life for his country, and with every prospect that he will die for its welfare, it is the highest expression of attachment for that country. Man has no possessions so valuable that he would not give them all to save the life of his son; and when he yields up his son in any cause, he has shown for it the highest love. It is impossible to conceive of a higher expression of love, if it could be done, than for a man on the bench, whose office required him to condemn the guilty to death, to be willing to substitute his own son on the gallows, and bid the murderer go free.

When we speak of the love of God to Jesus Christ, and of his sacrifice and self-denial, it is not to be understood as a matter of form or metaphor. It is not the use of words without sense. The love of God to the Redeemer is *not* the same kind of love which he has to the sun and stars; to the rivers and hills; to diamonds, and gold, and pearls; to the lily and the rose which he has made; or to the angelic hosts around his throne. The love of God for a holy *man* like Abraham, Isaiah, and Paul, is true and genuine attachment. The love of God to a holy and unfallen angel is real attachment. It is attachment to mind, and heart, and purity—and is not a name. But the love to Christ Jesus is peculiar. No other one sustained the relation to God which he did. No man had been so holy; no angel sustained such a



rank. He was the equal with the Father—yet incarnate; and the love of God to Christ was the love of himself. The Redeemer was the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; and he alone had joined the divinity with manhood, and expressed in his power, and wisdom, and holiness, the exact image of God. To give him was more than to give an angel—than all angels. It was to God what it would be for man to give up an only son. I know the difficulty of forming an adequate conception of this; but having settled in my mind the full belief that the Bible is true, I do not believe that the representation that there was *real* love in the gift of a Saviour is to be frittered away, or that the solemn declarations which abound there expressing the same idea as my text, are unmeaning. See a man sit on the bench of justice. See a prisoner arraigned on a charge of treason. See the solemn and just progress of the trial, until the man stands condemned, and the sentence of the law is about to fall on him. ‘He is guilty,’ says the judge, ‘no man can vindicate him; no man can stay the regular operation of the law but myself. There stands my son—my only son—my hope, my stay. Officer, bind him. Lay him on the hurdle. Drag him to the place of death, and let his quartered body show to the nation that I hate the crime.’ If this *could* be, who would doubt the greatness of the love? When God says that this *did* exist in his case, who shall doubt that *he* loved the guilty and the lost?

(2.) But no *man* has ever manifested such love as this. If the opportunity has ever occurred, it has not been embraced; should it occur often, it would not be embraced. Man would shrink from it. In a few instances one man has been willing to sacrifice his life for a friend; and not a few fathers and mothers have been willing to endanger *their* lives for the welfare of a son or daughter. But the instance has never yet occurred where a man was willing to give his own life, or the life of a child, for an enemy. No monarch on the throne has ever thought of giving the heir to his crown to die for a traitor, or for a rebellious province; and amidst the multitudes of treasons which have occurred, it has never, probably, for one instant crossed the bosom of the offended sovereign to

suppose that such a thing was possible; and if it *had* occurred it would have been at once dismissed as not worth more than a passing thought. No magistrate has ever lived who would have been willing to sentence his own son to the gallows in place of the guilty wretch whom it was his duty to sentence to death. Not an instance has ever occurred in our own country—rich as it is in examples of benignity and kindness—in which a judge on the bench would have been willing to commute a punishment in this manner, if it had been in strict accordance with equity and law; and probably the records of all nations might be searched in vain for such an instance. We know that monarchs often feel, and that magistrates are not destitute of a tender heart, and that the man on the bench, who passes the severe sentence of the law, often does it in tears. The present king of France passes every night to a late hour in carefully examining the cases of those who are condemned to death, and in the silence of the night-watches ponders all the reasons why a pardon should be extended in any case, and often with a heavy heart signs the warrant for death; and Washington wept when his duty constrained him to approve the sentence which doomed the accomplished Andre to the gallows; but would these feelings in either instance, or in any instance, prompt to the surrender of a son—an only son—to the disgrace of the gibbet to save the spy or the traitor? We are saying nothing in disparagement of such men—for they are but men, and not God—when we say that their feelings of compassion have made no approach to such a sacrifice. Their deep emotions; their tears; their genuine sorrow; their unaffected and noble benevolence—though an honor to our nature—have not approached the question whether such a sacrifice was possible or proper; and we may add, it is not to be approached in this world. The nearest approach of which I have ever heard to any thing *like* this feeling, was in the pathetic wish of David that *he* had himself been permitted to die in the place of a rebellious and ungrateful son. “O, my son, Absalom! my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” 2 Kings xviii. 33. Strong was that love which would lead a monarch and a father to

be willing to die for such a son; but how far removed still from the love which would lead to the sacrifice of a son for the guilty and the vile!

But "God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for us. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to die for us." And such a death! It stands by itself—a death of unequalled shame and woes. To be treated as a malefactor; to be rejected and reviled; to take the vacated place of a murderer; to be subjected to lingering torture; to be nailed to a cross—yes, nailed there to hang suspended till death should end the scene; to endure through six long hours the pangs of crucifixion; to endure reproach, and scorn, and contempt, and mockery, even on the cross—a place where, if any where, compassion should be shown, and where mockery should cease; to be willing to endure all this voluntarily, this was the love of Christ.

Every thing about the scene on Calvary fills me with amazement. I cannot understand it; it is all—*all* so unlike man. The gift of such a Saviour; the patience of the sufferer; the forbearance of God; the fact that no thunder rolls, and no lightnings flash, to strike the crucifiers of his Son in death; the fact that no angelic legion appears to seize and bear him away from the cross; the fact that in that unnatural night no angel of death goes, as through the hosts of Sennacherib, to smite the murderers; the fact that he lingers on, and lingers on—while the blood flows drop by drop, and stains the tree, and his body, and the ground, until life wears away—and he dies! O, it is wonderful. It stands alone; and *I* desire to stand alone—to close the eye on all other scenes of love and suffering, and look there till my heart is full, and I learn the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of God. And there, too, I desire to tell my fellow-sinners that this is love—the love which God had for this world. It is not in the glorious sun that rides in the heavens, or the silent and solemn march of the stars at night, that I most see his love; it is not in the running stream, and the landscape, and the songs in the groves; it is not in bird, beast, or dewy morn, or grateful evening mild; it is on Calvary, and in the sufferings

there. There all is love—love unknown, unthought of elsewhere; love that fills my eyes with tears, and my heart with overflowing gratitude, and my soul with peace.

O for this love, let rocks and hills  
Their lasting silence break,  
And all harmonious human tongues  
The Saviour's praises speak.

Yes, we will praise thee, dearest Lord,  
Our souls are all on flame;  
Hosanna round the spacious earth,  
To thine adored name.

Angels, assist our mighty joys,  
Strike all your harps of gold;  
But when you raise your highest notes,  
His love can ne'er be told.

III. I proposed, in the third place, to consider the extent of this love. It was for "the world." This is the idea which I desire to illustrate.

(1.) It was for no part of the world considered as elect or chosen, in contradistinction from the non-elect or the reprobate.—I hold to the doctrine of election as a precious doctrine of the Bible, and I have no other hope of the salvation of man than in that doctrine. I preach only because I believe God has a purpose of mercy; and were it not that I believe that he will attend his message with his special grace, and in accordance with an eternal purpose, I should close this Bible and leave this pulpit in despair. But when I look at the work of the atonement, I look at a grand and glorious transaction that lies *back*, in the order of nature, of the purpose of election, and that in its original applicability is limited by no design of God. It is for the world—'that *whosoever* believeth may not perish, but have everlasting life.' I see in it a work designed to show the benignity of God; showing how God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth; how he can maintain his truth and yet forgive; how he can welcome rebels to his favor and yet show that he hates their sins; how he can admit them to the fellowship of angels, and yet not have them revolt at the accession to their number, or lose their confidence in God, as if he were disposed to treat the evil and the good alike



And I love to contemplate it as it stands in its original glory—as it is an emanation of the divine goodness. I love to contemplate it, not in reference to the comparatively narrow question of selfishness, ‘who shall or who shall not be saved’; not narrowed down by a reference to a sordid commercial transaction of debt and purchase; but with reference to the display of the divine perfections—the exhibition of the mercy and the goodness of God. So I love to stand on the shore of the ocean, while surge after surge breaks at my feet; and the blue expanse stretches out illimitably before me; and ships ride proudly over the deep, and to contemplate it not with reference to the question whether it will safely bear a cargo of *mine* across it or not, but as a glorious exhibition of the power and greatness of God. So I love to stand on some eminence, and look down upon the landscape, and to survey the spreading forests, and the river, and the fields, and the water-falls, and the villages, and the churches, not with the narrow inquiry, ‘what is all this worth;’ but what a view is there here of the goodness of God, and the greatness of his compassion to the children of men! So I stand at Niagara, and as God “pours” the water “from his hollow hand,” and the soul is filled with emotions of unutterable sublimity, I will not ask what is all this worth *for a mill-seat*, but I will allow the scene to lift my soul up to God; to teach me lessons of his power and greatness, and to show me the littleness of all that man can do. And so I will look on the glorious work of the atonement. I will look at it BACK of the question who is, or who is not, to be benefitted by it. I will ask what new manifestation there is in it of the character of God; what is there to elevate the soul; what is there to make me think more highly of the love, the truth, and the justice of my Maker; what is there to expand the soul, and to elevate it above the sordid views and the groveling propensities of this world?

(2.) It was for “the world.” It was, therefore, for no rank, or *caste* among men. It was not for any order of men, favored by blood, or rank, or office, or name. There has been a strong tendency every where to exalt one class of men above another as more honored by birth



and by heaven than others. Hence in one land we have the hereditary aristocracy of *caste*, sanctioned by all the authority of religion, and enforced by all the power derived from the fact that it runs back to the most distant antiquity. In another we have the aristocracy of titled ranks, founded on the claims of some illustrious ancestors, and the transmission of their title to their sons; and this elevates one class in feeling as well as in power above the humbler ranks of mortals. In other lands, where these distinctions are unknown, there is a constant tendency to create some permanent distinctions among the different orders of society, and where it cannot be done under the sanction of religion, or the splendid deeds of an honored ancestry, or by law, to create it by the pride of wealth and family; by the distinction of color and complexion; by the difference of employment or profession; or by a self-created notion of ascendancy in one class above another.

Now, it requires all the power of the truth that God 'LOVED THE WORLD'—the whole world—to subdue and control this pride of rank; that he did not die for nobles merely, or for princes, for the rich or the honored, but that he died for all; that the beggar and the slave had a remembrance in his dying love as well as the monarch on his throne; and that if men are saved, they must be saved as companions in redemption, as they have been in guilt and in exposure to death. They *are* on a level. It is not redemption that *makes* them so. They were so before; and redemption only recognises that fact. The same blood flows through their veins. They are tainted by the same original corruption of sin. They are destined to endure the same pangs of sickness and of death, and they will moulder back side by side to dust. God loved the one rank as much as the other—the monarch on the throne as much as the beggar—and *no more*; the man of wealth as much as the man of poverty—and *no more*; the man who by his talents can transmit his name to future times, as much as he who dies and is at once forgotten—and *no more*.

(3.) Finally, it was for the world—the whole world. It was then limited in its design to no color or complexion. Here, too, there is a strong tendency in the mind

of man to feel that color and complexion give some pre-eminence. Men on this found their right to bind, and chain, and task their fellows, and exact their toil with stripes. They kidnap them, and convey them, amidst many terrors, to distant lands. They expose them for sale, as if they belonged to the brute creation. They examine their health, and their strength, and their soundness, as they do the animal that is exposed to sale. They buy them as they do the inferior creation. They disregard the ties of parentage and brotherhood; of blood and of affection, as if they were a trifle or a name. They withhold the Bible, as if they had no immortal nature; and they shut them out from the blessings of the everlasting gospel, as if death was the end of consciousness and the extinguisher of being.

Now, it requires all the power of the gospel to break down and annihilate this feeling, and to make us realize that he with a different skin from ours is a brother—a brother in hope as well as in sin. We had one father. We have one nature. We have one God; one Saviour. Beneath that less attractive external form—less attractive to us, but not to God; in that debased, and worn down, and crushed human frame—crushed by sorrow and by toil—there dwells an immortal spirit that might be pure like an angel; a soul worth all which it cost—and it could cost no more—in redemption; the germ of endless being; the beginning of undying life. It will live on, and live on, when kingdoms shall be forgotten, and when all the proud monuments that have been reared by oppressed and purchased sinews shall have crumbled back to dust. For that oppressed and broken spirit Christ died. That down-trodden man God loved when he loved the world, and gave his only begotten Son to die. And I love to feel—and will feel;—it makes me love the gospel more, and the Saviour more, that for the red man of the forest Christ died—whether he lingers pensively around his fathers' graves, or heaves a deep-drawn sigh as he looks on the stream where his fathers fished, or the ample plains, where, in the elasticity of savage life, he pursued the game of the forest; or whether forced away by national injustice, and by the violation of compacts, he turns his back sullenly on all those fair lands, and goes

with solitary step and slow to the setting sun, broken-hearted, to lie down and die. And I love to feel, and will feel ;—it makes me love the gospel more, and the Saviour more—that for the black man of Africa he died—whether sunk in debasement on his native shores—the victim of degrading superstition there ; or whether borne a captive across the ocean, and bound down by ignorance and toil in Christian lands. He is a man—an immortal man—a redeemed man—and not a chattel or a thing. Christ died not for chattels and for things ; he died for souls ; for man ; for immortal minds ; for those who may yet burst every shackle and every bond, and range the world of glory as immortal freemen there.

In conclusion, I might remark, were there time, that the gospel should be preached to all men—to elect and non-elect ; to rich and poor ; to bond and free. No man has a right to designate ranks and classes, when he preaches the gospel. He who does not sincerely offer the gospel to all men ; who has mental reservations and drawbacks, violates his commission, and dishonors the gospel and its author. “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” is the command ; and this is to rule our preaching, and to govern our lives.

The gospel is to be preached to all classes of men—to the debased and down-trodden, as well as the free and the elevated. He who makes an arrangement by which any class of men is excluded from the gospel, invades the prerogative of God ; prohibits what he commands, and exposes himself to the wrath of the Almighty. Any system of things on earth which prevents the fair promulgation of the gospel, is a violation of the arrangements of heaven, and will, sooner or later, meet with the curse of the Most High. It is itself a curse—a withering, a blighting curse ; and on it heaven will never smile.

But chiefly I wished to say to one class of this audience, that all along in life you have, by resisting the gospel, been resisting the expressions of tender love. You know what I mean. When you stand up against a tyrant, you feel that you are right in resisting him. When you draw your sword against an aggressor, you feel that you are right. But how do you feel when you resist the kindness of a father, and slight all the expressions of his

love for you? How do you feel when you have broken a mother's heart, and when all the expressions of her love could not keep you from the ways of sin, and she died of grief? O then the scene, the fact is changed. There is *guilt*; and there the heart feels. So you have resisted God. You have disregarded his love. Your life has been little else than a constant resisting of the appeals of his compassion. His love in redemption you have slighted, and his offers of mercy you have shunned. O, the cross, the cross of Christ! O, the bleeding victim there! O, the pangs and sorrows of that dark day when he died! How it shows the love of God—his tenderness for man—his desire that he should be saved! And O, what a rock is the human heart that has no feeling, when God's incarnate Son—the beloved of heaven—hangs there and bleeds; is forsaken; is pale; is exhausted; is convulsed in agony—and dies!

Hearts of stone, relent, relent,  
Break, by Jesus' cross subdued;  
See his body, mangled—rent,  
Covered with a gore of blood;  
Sinful soul, what hast thou done!  
Murdered God's eternal Son!

Yes, our sins have done the deed,  
Drove the nails that fixed him there;  
Crowned with thorns his sacred head,  
Pierced him with a soldier's spear;  
Made his soul a sacrifice,  
For a sinful world he dies.

Will you let him die in vain?  
Still to death pursue your Lord?  
Open tear his wounds again,  
Trample on his precious blood?  
No! With all my sins I'll part;  
Saviour, take my broken heart.



## SERMON III.

### WHY WILL YE DIE?

Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?

THE ministers of the gospel are sent to endeavor to arouse their fellow-men to a sense of their danger, and to win them to God. We are to tell, in simple but solemn language, all that we know about God, and Christ, and heaven, and hell; to rebuke, to warn, and to invite, by all the means that God may put in our power in order to save them. We are to throw ourselves in the paths of sinners; and to attempt to stay their goings as they travel down to death. If they *will* die, our duty is plain. It is to be found throwing obstacles in their way as they go to ruin; addressing ourselves to their reason and their conscience; reminding them of death and the judgment; and appealing to them by all that is inviting in heaven, and fearful in future wo, not to go down to the place of despair, to be the everlasting enemies of God. We have no choice here. We must warn them *as if* they were to die; we must speak to them *as if* they were in danger of eternal ruin.

Who are they who are thus to be addressed? They are the wicked:—the wicked, as the Bible uses that term—the impenitent, and the unbelieving, and the violators of the law of God, of every age, and character, and complexion. The Bible makes but two grand divisions among men—as there will be but two at the day of judgment—the righteous and the wicked; they who serve God, and they who serve him not. In the one class are the redeemed, the renewed, the praying, the pure, the friends of Jesus; in the other they who are unrenewed, unsanctified, and unforgiven; they who do not pray, and who do not love the Redeemer, and who have not a well-

founded hope of heaven—be they profane, and sensual, and corrupt; be they proud and haughty; or be they amiable and externally moral; or be they accomplished and winning in their manners. I say the externally moral, the accomplished, the winning in their manners. I say it, because the Bible classes them there. I know of no promise to them of salvation *because* they are such; I see no statement that one man is to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ, and another by accomplishment, and freedom from gross vices. A heart exceedingly wicked may reside beneath a most attractive outward mien. Fascinating manners are not faith in Jesus Christ; nor is amiableness the love of God. There are but two classes among you to-day—the righteous and the wicked. There are but two paths that are trod by mortals—the narrow way, and the broad way. There are but two places to be occupied at the judgment—the right, and the left hand of the Judge. There are but two worlds which are to receive us all at last—heaven and hell. There are no Elysian fields which you may traverse for whom the Christian's heaven would be too holy and pure; or where you might possess and exhibit your amiableness and accomplishments apart from the grossly vile in the future world. There is a line which divides the human race, and which will divide it forever. On one side are the lovers of God, and on the other are the wicked; and that portion of the latter class who are present here to-day I desire to address, and to say to you, “Why will ye die?”

Death means here eternal death. For why, or how can God address mortal men, and ask them why they should die and be laid in their graves? They cannot help it. *He* has himself said, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” “It is appointed unto men once to die,”—and “There is no escape in that war.” To ask us ‘*why* we should die,’ and be consigned to the grave, and moulder back to dust, as if we could avoid it, would be to tantalize and mock us—and God would not, could not do it. But to ask us *why* we will persevere and go down to hell, when we might be saved; why we would dwell with devouring fire, when we might dwell amid the glories of heaven, is a question worthy of a God, and

is fit to be deeply pondered by every traveller to eternity.

I shall endeavor to enforce that question. I shall address this part of my audience, with the earnest prayer that they may hear this question of their Maker to-day; and with a regard to my account to my Maker, and to your good, I shall submit to you now a few propositions sustained by my text, and designed to set its meaning before you.

I. It is the unalterable purpose of God that the wicked shall turn or die. In confirmation of this proposition, I refer you to the text. There it is of necessity implied that it is the solemn purpose of God that the wicked shall turn or die. He would not expostulate with them in this solemn manner if there were no danger, and if no such purpose were formed. It is not the manner of our Maker to assume earnestness when it is uncalled for; or to use words that are unmeaning; or to make appeals that are designed needlessly to alarm men. He does not trifle with the creatures which he has made. He does not hold up imaginary objects of dread. When God places himself in our path; when he lifts up the voice of solemn warning and remonstrance; when he tells of danger, it is no imaginary scene. It is no work of the fancy. It is real. The highest proof of the reality and certainty of danger and guilt, is for God to speak of them *as if* they were so.

Many persons profess to hold that all men will be saved. Many men *feel* that in some indefinable way sinners may yet escape future wrath. Many feel, and desire to feel, that there is no danger, and that all that is said of eternal death is the work of fancy and of fiction. It is not unnatural to dread to think on it—for it is fitted to produce alarm and pain; and it is not unnatural to *wish* that there were no danger, and no death, and no hell. But look at this subject, and see if your Maker's earnestness and his solemn warning furnish no proof that there is danger. You feel, or think, or hope that there is no danger of eternal death, and that alarm is needless. Tell me, then, what is the meaning of the solemn address in the text. Would God—the ever blessed and benevolent God, speak of death, when there was none, and of

hell which had no existence? Would *he* say, ‘Why rush into those flames?’ when there are no flames? ‘Why go into that pestilential region?’ when there *is* no pestilence? ‘Why go on till you fall down that precipice?’ when there *is* no precipice? ‘Why tread that region of death?’ when there is no death? No. God does not thus speak to men. And when he asks them *why* they will die; when he entreats them to turn lest they die, it is full proof that unless they repent they must die. There can be no stronger proof of this. And without any impropriety of imagination, or any improper use of Scripture language, God may be regarded to-day as present in this house, and as looking over this congregation, and into each heart—and onward to the world of death—and saying to each one, “Why will you die?” He throws himself in the path of the wicked, and by this question assures them that unless they turn they must die. He speaks to the wicked and the thoughtless—to you the gay, and the insensible, and the unconverted, in your path to hell, and puts the solemn question to-day, “Why will ye die?” Tell me, would he use this language if you were in no danger? Would he use it if *he* knew that all men were to be saved?

The text does not stand alone. If any man doubts that it is the unalterable purpose of God that the wicked shall turn or die, let him open at pleasure any part of the Bible. “Verily, verily,” said the Redeemer, “except a man be born again, he shall not see the kingdom of God.” “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” There is no ambiguity here. There is no wish to hide a painful doctrine. There is no concealment. If it be so that there is a world of death, and that the wicked go there, they do not go unapprized of it. They are told what to expect, and what is before them.



The purpose of God on this point has been expressed in every variety of way in the Bible, and in the events of his Providence. In the Bible—by solemn assurance; by warning; by entreaty; by remonstrance; by appeals; by threatening; by the description of the dying and the dead who have gone down to hell. In his Providence—by the cutting off of the wicked; by his judgments on the old world, and on the cities of the plain, “Set forth as an example suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” In his Providence now. Every pain is designed to admonish us. Every hour of sickness; every funeral procession; every open grave reminds us of it. The earth is full of the warnings and of the monuments of his displeasure against sin, and of the assurances that unless the guilty turn it is his unalterable purpose that they shall die. There is no relaxing, no misgiving on the part of God. Six thousand years have made no change in his purpose; and it is as true now as it was in the old world, and in the time of Ezekiel, that unless the wicked turn they shall die.

If I had time, I think I could vindicate this doctrine; at least I could show that the objections against it are unfounded. But I have no time to do it now, and it is not necessary. What I wish to show is, that it is the unchangeable purpose of God that the wicked must turn or perish. The passages of scripture to which I have referred demonstrate it. They *would* not, they *could* not stand in a revelation which meant to teach that there was no danger. Language has no terrors more explicit, and none more solemn than these. Here stand these passages—full of solemn truth, and solemn warning—from age to age, to meet the caviller and the despiser of this generation on his way to hell—and then to meet the caviller and the despiser of the next generation on *his* way to hell—and thus to warn each successive generation that it is the unalterable law of God that the wicked shall turn or die.

Human opinions and human feelings have no bearing on this doctrine. They do not, they cannot affect it. The Bible travels on from age to age bearing the same fearful doctrine, and is unchanged in its warnings and ap-

peals. Some of each generation listen, are admonished, and saved;—the rest pass on and die. Human opinion does not alter facts. Human opinion does not remove death-beds, and graves, and sorrows; nor will it remove and annihilate the world of wo. Facts stand unaffected by the changes of human belief; and fearful events roll on just as though men expected them. Nine-tenths of all the dead expected not to die at the time when in fact they have died, and more than half now listen to no admonition that death will ever come. They who have died had an expectation that they would live many years. But death came. He was not stayed by their belief or unbelief. He came steadily on. Each day he took a stride towards them—and step by step he advanced, so that they could not retreat or evade him till he was near enough to strike, and they fell. And so though the living will not hear, death comes to them. And so the doom of the sinner rolls on. Each day, each hour, each moment, it draws near. Whether he believes it or not makes no difference in the fact. It comes. It will not recede. In spite of all attempts to reason, or to forget it, the time comes; and at the appointed time the sinner dies.

Cavil and ridicule do not affect this. There is no power in a joke to put away convulsions, and fevers, and groans. The laugh and the song close no grave, and put back none of the sorrows of the second death. The dwellers in Pompeii could not put back the fires of the volcano by derision; nor would the mockery of the inhabitants of Sodom have stayed the sheets of flame that came from heaven. The scoffing sinner dies, and is lost just like others; the young man that has learned to cavil and deride religion, dies just like others. No cavil has yet changed *a fact*; none has ever stayed the arrow of death.

This is plain. But will not God make allowance for insensibility on this subject? Will he not pity, and spare, and save him who has no feeling, and no desire to be saved? I answer, No. It is not the fault of God that the sinner does not feel. It is not because he has revealed no truth fitted to make men feel. It is not because

the truth is not plain enough. I ask you, is not the ground of your complaint—not that it is not plain enough—but that it is *too* plain? Is not that the feeling which you have to-day? Has not God revealed truth enough to affect the heart, and to make it feel? You are insensible, you say, to your condition. How has this been produced? By God?—*I* answer. By resisting his appeals; slighting his warnings; grieving his Spirit; refusing to listen to his messengers. You have sought it, and loved it, and would allow nothing to rouse you from it. You have made up your mind on the subject—and now will you blame God? You may close your eyes to the frightful precipice of which a friend warns you, but will you say that you might not have seen the danger? God is not to blame when men are blind to their own interests. He has told you what you are—a lost sinner. He has told you what is before you—death. He has apprized you when it will come—soon. He has lifted the veil from the eternal world and shown to you his throne, and his judgment-bar, and the world of wo. And now, I ask, who is to blame if the sinner is unmoved and unconcerned? If, with the proof of guilt which God has furnished; and the solemn warning in the Bible before you; and the exhibition of the death of Jesus for your sins, you are unmoved, will you blame God? What other truths could you ask, or expect to impress the mind? There are no other, no higher truths than these. Heaven has no other, than to offer its eternal bliss to mortals. Hell has no other, than to threaten its eternal woes. The grave has no other, than to assure you that you must all sleep and moulder there. God has no higher truth than to declare his conviction of the guilt and danger of man; to proclaim his love by the gift of his Son to die; to offer himself as the portion of the soul, and his heaven as our home; and to invite as a Father, and to threaten as a God, to induce us to return to himself. If the sinner is insensible, he has none to blame but himself; if he dies, he dies with the assurance often made to him—made to him till he was weary of it—that it was the unalterable purpose of God that the wicked should turn or die.

II. My second proposition is, that there is danger that the wicked will die the second death. In proof of this, hear these remarks. If there were no danger of it, God would not address you in the language of the text; and in the similar language with which the Bible abounds. He does not assume earnestness where there is no danger; he does not warn men with increasing importunity, unless he sees the danger deepen. Need I pause to prove further that there is such danger? Need I stop to show in what it lies? A sinner never takes a step which is not on the crumbling verge of a precipice, from which, if he falls, he falls to rise no more. A man who may die at any moment, and who is unprepared to die, is in danger of hell each step that he takes. A soul that is insensible and unmoved—which no appeal reaches, and no voice alarms, is in danger of ruin. A man who lives for himself, and not for God, is in danger of death eternal, and may at any moment be cut off from life and hope. There are obstacles which lie between each impenitent man and heaven, and there are strong probabilities that these obstacles will never be surmounted, and that the soul will be lost. I wish to show you some of these obstacles, and to represent to you the probability that they will never be overcome, but that they will always stand in the way of your salvation. The insensibility of the sinner is one proof of the danger of losing the soul, and that danger lies in the difficulty of arousing the mind to think of its own salvation, and the unwillingness of the heart to feel its own guilt and danger. A man may be made to feel when he is in danger of bankruptcy, though he may shut his eyes long to the truth. A man may be made to feel that he is in danger of dying, when disease has seized upon him, and his frame is wasting away. The eyes may shed tears over a novel, or at an exhibition of a tragedy, or in scenes of real grief. The heart is susceptible to the appeals of friendship, and gratitude, and love, and feels deeply at the prospect of the loss of reputation or property. Scenes of imaginary grief draw forth tears, but there are no tears to shed at the cross of Christ. The danger of death sometimes alarms, but there is no feeling of danger at the prospect of losing the soul. There appeals are made



in vain. The eye weeps not, and the heart feels not. There are no tears to shed, and there is no power to create concern. The unconverted heart of man is a hard rock:—no persuasion, no entreaty, no command, no remonstrance, no glowing description of heaven, no fearful denunciation of eternal wo, moves or affects it. Its insensibility, in the circumstances in which we are placed, is the most mysterious and wonderful fact in the universe, of which we have any knowledge, and all philosophy fails to account for it.

Now, the danger of which I am speaking is this. It is, that this state of things will continue—and continue until it be too late. I argue it and urge it, because you *mean* it shall, and intend that nothing shall arouse you; because it continues till death in such a majority of cases just like your own; because you have succeeded in continuing it so long, and have learned the unhappy art of warding off all appeals, and of resisting all approaches to the soul; because you have already resisted, perhaps, as solemn appeals as can ever be made to you; and because you may have gone far over your little journey of life, and may be near its close. He who has successfully resisted the appeals of the gospel, and the providence, and the Spirit of God for twenty, thirty, or forty years, and whose mind is now unmoved, has the prospect of being able to resist them until life shall close, and of dying in the same insensibility in which he lives. What, my hearer, will ever rouse you? Is there any new law to be promulgated from some fearful Sinai, clothed in blackness and tempest? Is there to be some new incarnation of God, to appeal to you by more fearful wonders than those of Calvary? Is there to be some new heaven revealed, more glorious, more rich, more inviting, more lovely, to win you? Is there to be a hell disclosed of more awful horror, and of longer burnings? Oh, no, none of these things. You have all to rouse you which you can ever have. Death; the grave; the cross; heaven; hell: all—all appeal to you, and call upon you to turn and live. What, let me ask, is to rouse you? Do you expect to be aroused when you reach a more favorable time of life? With many, many of you, the most favorable time is passed already, and you were unmoved.

Do you expect to be aroused by some alarming dispensation of Providence, and some more solemn call to repentance? You, perhaps, who have seen a child die, and heard God speak from his bed and his grave to you in vain; you who have been stretched on a bed of pain, and compelled to look into eternity, yet unmoved; you who have walked through scenes of calamity where God was, and where you refused to hear his voice, do *you* expect that *affliction* will awaken you? Do you wait that God should send his Spirit into your hearts, and arouse you? You who have often grieved that Spirit, and who know that with your present desires you would resist and oppose him again, do you look and long for those heavenly influences? Do you wait for others to lead the way to God, and expect to go with them? Tell me, how many of your friends have become Christians, and left you unwilling to follow them? Do you wait for a miracle to convert you—for some supernatural influence to bear you to heaven against your own will? Then *I* tell you, you wait in vain. For this you may wait till “seas shall waste, and skies in smoke decay.” There *are* no such influences. The heart must yield, or there is no salvation. The hard heart must feel, and repent, and become willing that God should reign, or there *is* no salvation. There are no insensible and unwilling saints in heaven. All there rejoice in the PRIVILEGE of salvation, and have wept, and sighed, and groaned over sin, and have prayed for pardon. The truth, my hearer, is, that you do not love religion; and the danger is, that this state of things will remain till you die.

I have spoken of insensibility as a source of danger. I might have told you of other dangers. Young man—your ambition is endangering *your* soul. Your love of gain is estranging you from God. Your pride is a source of danger to you. Your youthful passions; your unholy companions; your amusements; your loose and unsettled principles; your sceptical thoughts; your intention to delay this subject; your love of self; your nearness to the grave; your exposure to death—all endanger your salvation. The allurements of the world; the arts of a cunning and subtle foe; the deceitfulness of your own hearts; the propensity to delay, all endanger your salva-

tion. They meet you every where ; every day ;—in your hearts ; in the world ; in your feelings ;—and it is for reasons such as these that God addresses you in the language of the text, and asks you *why* you will die ? *He* sees the danger ; he knows it ; he loves your soul ; and he points you to the perils of your way. Look at these facts. I ask if you are not in danger ? I ask if there is not a fearful probability that your souls will be lost ? I ask if there is not reason to fear that you will be unmoved by all the appeals of the gospel ; that you will hear unconcerned all the thunders of the law ; that you will tread on in the path of sin unconcerned ;—that, in one word, while you live you will live without God, and when you die you will die without God, and when you go to eternity you will make the awful plunge “in the dark” without God ? You will remember that these difficulties are your own. God is not responsible for them. He has not made them. Your indifference to religion ; your love of the world ; your love of ease ; your love of sin, are all your own. Your own heart cherishes them ; and so dearly you love them that nothing will induce you to abandon them.

III. My third general proposition is, that the kind of death referred to in the text is such as to make earnestness of remonstrance proper. If it were not, God would not use this strong language. If it were a trifle, an affair of a moment, or a day ; if it were temporary pain or distress, he would not remonstrate in this manner. When does he remonstrate with us about exposing ourselves to sickness or temporal death ? But when God uses this language, he sees all that can be seen in the sinner’s doom. His omniscient eye is on the grave, and on hell ; and seeing all, he asks, why, why will ye die ? He sees what you do not, and cannot see ; and seeing all, he speaks as a Father and a Friend, and asks, why, why will ye die ? Could you see it as he sees it, or as even man on earth may be made to see it, you would cease to wonder at the earnestness of the question.

What is the death referred to in the text ? What is death at all ? What is eternal death ?—for the one is the faint emblem and image—and, alas ! often the forerunner of the other. We know something—yet little—of death.

We see to-day a lovely and vigorous youth, flushed with hope, and full of cheerfulness and joy—the pride of his friends, and the hope of the community. His eye is radiant with genius; his cheek blooms with the rose of health; his frame is manly and commanding; his step is elastic and joyous; his heart is bounding with hope. He comes to lend to the social circle the enchantment of his conversation and his wit; and he looks onward to health, and honor, and long life. There is not a crown so brilliant in the grasp of ambition that he does not aspire to it; there is not a field of honor which he does not hope to tread. To-morrow that elastic foot-tread ceases to be heard in the cheerful circle. That voice is hushed. The fire has departed from that eye; and the color from that cheek; and that large heart has ceased to beat, and the gushing blood has ceased to flow; and all that ambition, and hope, and wit, and humor, and gaiety have fled;—and there is left—what? A mass of moulded clay—now like the marble—cold, but more perishable; a moulded form, but with a peculiarity of feature, a chilliness, a fixedness, a solemnity, a repulsiveness, that we see, but cannot describe—and that nature nowhere else reveals but among the dead. Is this death?—Who shall tell us what it is; or what that spirit felt when it fled—driven by the grim king away from the clay tenement? This *is* death—the death of the *body*—but it is but the image of death. The true death—the real death, is the death of the soul. It is when the soul is severed from its God, and from hope, and peace, and joy; when it lives—without life; survives—only to suffer;—is cut off from its high destiny—and driven away from him who is the RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. Religion is life; and heaven is life; and hell is existence without life—continued being, where the soul is held in existence only to continue to die. THIS IS DEATH. To be seen, it must be seen beyond the grave—in hell.

What is *that* death? Why should we dread it? Hear him speak who saw it all, and who knew it all. “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” There,



according to him, the sufferer shall lift up the eyes, "being in torment," and ask in vain for a single "drop of water" to cool the tongue; there "the worm dieth not, and the fire shall not be quenched"; there shall be "everlasting punishment"; there shall be "outer darkness"; there shall be the execution of the sentence, "Depart, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." I have used only the words of the meek, and mild, and benevolent Redeemer—the most tender, and kind, and merciful of all who have dwelt on the earth, and who used such expressions as these, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" as if they became no other lips but his. He never concealed this danger. He never spake or acted as if it did not exist. He sought to save men as if the danger were real. He was just as serious, and solemn, and tender, as if HE felt that every man was in danger of it. And he told men when he lived, and he tells you now, just what the sinner has to expect. *He* felt that men were in danger, or he would never have left the heavens to save them. And was it any common or any imaginary danger that would lead him from heaven to the manger, to the cross, to the tomb?

I know not what eternal death is. I can tell you some things. It is far away from heaven—those blissful plains where eternal joy dwells. It is far from hope—hope that here "comes to all." It is the abode of all the abandoned, and profane, and vile—the collected guilt and wretchedness of this world. It is a place where no sanctuary like this opens its doors and invites to heaven; where no Sabbath returns to bless the soul; where no message of mercy comes to the suffering and the sad. It is a world unblessed like this with the work of redemption. On no second Calvary there is a Redeemer offered for sin; and from no tomb there does he rise to life to bless the sufferers with the offer, and to furnish the pledge of heaven. No Spirit strives there to reclaim the lost; and on no zephyr there is the message of mercy borne, whispering peace. No God meets the desponding there with promises and hopes; and from no eye there is the tear of sorrow ever wiped away. There is no such friend as Jesus; no voice of mercy; no day-star of hope; no father, mother, daughter, pastor, angel, to sympathize;

no one to breathe for the lost the prayer for pardon; no great Intercessor to bear the cry for mercy up to the throne of God. It is death—lingering, long, interminable death—the dying sorrow prolonged from age to age; onward—onward toward eternity—ever lingering, never ending.

It is eternal. So said he who is the faithful and true witness, and who cannot lie. They “go away into everlasting punishment.” This settles the question; and if you go there, you go with your eyes open. He deceives no one. He would undeceive all. I use scripture language. I have no power—no heart to attempt to portray these scenes. They are not topics for declamation. For of whom are these things spoken? Of the dwellers in distant worlds? Of those whom we have not seen? Alas! of many, many of the wicked in this house. How many now in despair may have occupied the seats which you now occupy—not suffered now to go and tell their brethren lest they also come into that place of torment! Oh, they are spoken of our kindred and friends—of wives, and husbands, and parents, and school-companions, and teachers, and pupils, who are out of Christ. They are spoken of those to whom we are bound by every tender tie, and to whom the heart is drawn by all the gushing sympathy of love; but are they less in danger on that account? O, is there no danger? Suppose a voice from heaven should be heard in this house, and saying to the living here, “The day is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth, they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation”; “the wicked shall be turned into hell”; “except ye repent, ye shall all perish”; is there a heart here that would not feel that there was danger? Should a hand be seen writing on these walls the names of *all* those here who are in danger of hell, how solemn would be this house! With what anxiety would you trace the record made! How anxiously would you look to see if *your* name was begun—was recorded—was fixed there! How deep the anguish of the soul! How deep, perhaps, the groans that would be heard in every part of this house!

IV. My fourth and concluding proposition is, that eter-

nal death is not necessary, and may be avoided. If it were necessary and inevitable, your Maker would not expostulate with you, and ask "Why will ye die?" By a solemn oath—the most solemn—the only one that the Creator can make—by himself—his own life—his existence—he declares that he has no pleasure in your death.

Nor does this solemn declaration stand alone. Open any page of the Bible, and you may find the same assurance every where. In every way in which we can conceive or desire, he has given the solemn assurance to men that if they die, it will not be because his ear is deaf to the cry of penitence, or his eye not compassionate to the returning prodigal, or because there is no provision for their salvation. What mean your spared lives, if he would have pleasure in your death? Why have you not been cut down long since in your sins? What mean the sorrows of the Redeemer in Gethsemane and on Calvary, if God wished your death? Why was a Saviour given to die? What mean the invitations of that Redeemer to all—to all to come and live? Why do I hear his kind voice meeting the sighs of the broken-hearted and the contrite, and saying, "Come unto me, ALL ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest?" Why his invitation, wide as the world, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"? Why your serious thoughts; your tender feelings; your convictions of sin; your desires of heaven—produced by the Holy Ghost—if God would have pleasure in your ruin? Why this message of mercy sent again to your souls, if God wished your death?

No, my hearers, I assure you that God wishes not your death. *Had* he desired it, instead of being to-day in this peaceful sanctuary, you would have been lifting up your eyes in the world of despair. He desires not your death. The Redeemer desires not your death. There is not an angel of light that desires your death. There is not one among the spirits of the just made perfect in heaven—be it departed father, mother, sister, child, that desires your death. There is not a pious friend among the living that desires your death. There is not one holy being throughout the universe, from Him that

sitteth on the throne to the humblest member of the Christian church, that does not desire your salvation.

Then why will you die? Why should you die? Why neglect the subject till you perish forever? I ask with earnestness and with affection, why, why will you die? What reason can be given why *you* should perish, while others are saved? Is it because God is unwilling? That *would* be a reason if it were so, but look at his solemn oath in the text. Is it because the Lord Jesus did not die for you? *That* would be a reason if it were so, but hear the solemn declaration of the scriptures: "He tasted death for every man"? Hear his own words, that the "Son of man would be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Is it because Christ is unwilling that you should be saved? *That* would be a reason, but hear him say, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Is it because there is no room in heaven; because it is limited, and is full; because there are no harps there that your hand might strike? *That* would be a reason, but hear the Redeemer say, "And yet there is room." Is it because you cannot come; because there are mountains of difficulties which you cannot overcome; because your sins are so great that they cannot be pardoned? *That* would be a reason; but hear the ever-blessed God, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be white as wool." Is it because the pleasures, and honours, and wealth of this world will be an equivalent for eternal sorrows; because there will be gain in enjoying these though you perish at last? *That* might have some show of reason, but what will you be profited "if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul"?

Then, why *will* you die? Why grieve away the Spirit of God? Why trample beneath your feet the blood of the Saviour? Why go down to death? Aged man, why exhaust the last drop of mercy as you totter over the tomb, and sigh out the remains of your earthly being in the prayer, 'O God! depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways?' Man of middle age, why tread on in the neglect of religion, in the path which



thousands have trod—the path that leads to death—devoting yourself to this world, only to reap immortal wo? Ye young; ye vigorous; ye full of hope, and hilarity, and ambition, why spend the spring-time of being amidst youthful pleasures in the neglect of God, and why should *you* die forever? Ye gay, ye guilty, ye thoughtless, ye anxious, ye aged, and ye young, your Maker meets you now, and asks you, ‘Why will ye die?’ O, that this question might be written in letters of living light in every gay assembly where you forget God; in the room where you sleep; and over your path every day as you go down to death! Why will ye die? why will ye die? why will ye die? Why go away from the cross? Why turn your backs on heaven? Why be miserable forever? Why linger on to all eternity in that immortal pain which never ceases—in the horrors of that death which never dies?

## SERMON IV.

### THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE HEART.

Jeremiah xvii. 9. The heart is deceitful above all things.

THAT is deceitful which tends to mislead, or in which we cannot confide. A man who professes friendship for us when we are in perplexity, and who leads us into additional perplexity, deceives us. When a traveller has lost his way, and a stranger meets him and offers to conduct him, and leads him on a wrong course, or so that he falls among robbers, he deceives him. Professed friends are sometimes deceitful, and are beautifully compared by Job to a brook in the desert. "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away. Which are turbid by means of the [melted] ice, in which the snow is hid [by being dissolved]. In the time when they become warm they evaporate; when the heat cometh they are dried up from their place. The channels of their way wind round about; they go into nothing and are lost. The caravans of Tema look; the travelling companies of Sheba expect to see them. They are ashamed that they relied on them; they come even to the place, and are confounded." Job vi. 15—20. They are deceitful—because in Eastern climates, and in sandy deserts, such streams are dried up or are lost in the sand. In the winter, or in the rainy season, they are swollen. In summer, and in times of drought, they disappear. They sink away in the sand, or they wind along in the desert, until they grow smaller and smaller, and finally disappear. The weary traveller that had at some seasons of the year pitched his tent there, returns again, and expects again to find the gurgling fountain, or the running stream, but is disappointed. Its waters are dried up, and the brook has deceived him. A *bow* is deceitful. "They turned back," says the

Psalmist, "and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers; they were turned aside like a deceitful bow." Ps. lxxviii. 57. "They return," says the Prophet when speaking of the false and unfaithful Jews, "they return, but not to the Most High; they are like a deceitful bow." Hos. vii. 16. A bow is deceitful when the arms are of unequal length, elasticity, or strength, or when, from any cause, the arrow does not follow the aim of the marksman, and turns aside. He who flatters us, and who designs to take advantage of our vanity to ruin our virtue, or to obtain our property, is deceitful. The man who professes to be your friend, and who stabs your reputation in the dark; who professing friendship sets in motion a train of evil reports and inuendoes, and suspicions, whose source you cannot trace, and whose malignity you cannot meet any more than you can a "mist from the ocean," is deceitful. He cannot be trusted. O how full is the world of deceit and imposition! Thousands and millions are the dupes of imposition in various ways, and no inconsiderable part of the human family seem to live that they may practise fraud on their fellow-men.

But the heart is deceitful above all these things. It is more deceitful than the man who professes friendship for us in perplexity, and who imposes on us; than the false guide to the traveller; than the brook, the bow, the flatterer, the slanderer. It is more likely to lead us astray than any one or all of them. To illustrate this truth will be the design of this discourse; and my plan will be to mention a few things in which men are deceived by their own hearts.

I. I observe in the first place, that men impose on themselves respecting their own character; or that the heart practises a deception in regard to its natural tendency and disposition. The human heart is a great deep:—a deep so turbid by sin and agitated by passion that we cannot look into it far; a deep which no line yet has been long enough to fathom. I believe that the true representation of the human heart is in the Bible, and that the hearts of all men are reflected there. The account in the history of the Bible of the depravity of man is not more humiliating than is the account in Tacitus and Sallust, in Hume and in Gibbon; the account in the Sacred Poets

is substantially the same as in Shakespeare and Byron; the account given by Paul is the same that you will find in the books of every traveller who has penetrated the dark regions of the heathen world. You admit the account to be true of the world at large, of other men; you take securities of others; you put padlocks and bolts on your stores; you guard your houses, *as if* you believed it were true. Others believe the same of you; and the Bible holds all to be substantially alike—all fallen and ruined.

And yet it is evident that men do not by nature attribute to themselves the character which is given of the human heart in the Bible. The Christian does. He believes that the account of the Bible is a fair representation of his own heart by nature, and of the heart of every other man. He has no more doubt of it than he has that the account there given of God is true. He has learned it by bitter experience; by the revelations of the Spirit; and it is to him a truth attested by many scenes of repentance, and by many tears. But the mass of men do not feel so. Perhaps you could scarcely offer a more signal affront to a man—do it as kindly as you can—than to go to him, and apply to *him as an individual*, the account of the human heart in the Bible. Who will bear to be told, though you may go with all the influence of the tender relations of friendship, and all the influence that you can take with you from any official relation, that his mind is “enmity against God;” that “in his flesh there dwelleth no good thing;” that he “is a hater of God;” that he is a “lover of pleasure more than a lover of God;” that he is “living without God and without hope;” that his “heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?” You will hear it from the desk—for (1.) you believe that it is our official duty to make the statement; and (2.) the statement is of necessity so general that no one feels himself particularly intended. But would you hear it from me, if I should come to you alone, and if I should make the statements with all the tenderness that I could assume? With all the respect which you might have for me as a man or a minister, would you take it kindly, or would you allow it?

As this is a matter pertaining to personal consciousness,



I may make my appeal to each individual. Is this the estimate which you have placed on yourselves? Does your view of your own heart accord with that which is given of the heart in the Bible? Or is not the following rather the estimate which you have formed of yourselves: That you are moral, and amiable, and true, and just. That your imperfections—for all have them—are rather of the head than of the heart, and that your general aim is right and pure. That the original and prevailing bent of your mind is to goodness rather than to sin; and that you have greatly cultivated and improved this original tendency, and have added much to it that claims the confidence and love of your friends and of the world. That though you have been guilty of faults, yet they are minor faults, few in number, and far between, that they have been more than corrected and compensated by a subsequent life of virtue; that they were not owing to any natural tendency to evil, but to your time of life, to the strength of temptation, or to a temperament signally susceptible and ardent. That you have a right to the confidence of the world at large—having wronged no man, defrauded no man, killed no man, corrupted no man, slandered no man, and that the integrity of your character is not to be called in question. That the charges in the Bible of utter and total depravity, if applied to you, are harsh and severe; and that the plan of salvation, proceeding on the supposition of the utter ruin and corruption of man, is unnecessary for you—however needful it may be for others—and is to be regarded by you as medicine is by those in health. It is valuable for those who are diseased; it is unnecessary for the well. If such be your belief, then I need not say there is a radical difference between your views and those of the Bible about your natural character, and your need of a Saviour.

Is it not possible that your heart has deceived you on this point? Let me suggest a few things for your consideration.

One is, that if the Bible be true, there *is* no such native excellence of character as you suppose you possess;—for in the most solemn manner, the Bible declares the whole race to be guilty, and ruined, and lost;—and the Bible has such evidences of its truth and its divine origin as

should lead you to suppose it *possible* that its account of the human character is correct.

Another consideration is, that multitudes of men who once had the same view of themselves which you have, have been convinced of their error, and have been led to accord with the account in the Bible. I allude to those who are now Christians. Once they were just as confident of their native purity as you are. They trusted just as much in their uprightness and integrity. They were just as much opposed to the doctrine of natural depravity. They cultivated the virtues and the graces of life, just as much and as successfully as you do. Many of them were upright, and moral, and honorable in the sight of men. They moved in the circles of fashion and of honor; they had the confidence of the world; they were without a stain on their external character; they thought, as you do, that their hearts were pure, and that the charges in the Bible were singularly harsh and unkind. But they have changed their opinions. They have seen their hearts in a different light. They now admit that all that the Bible said of their hearts was true; and have yielded themselves to the overpowering evidence that they are by nature wholly prone to sin. Now, if they were deceived, you may be also. If they are now right in their views you are wrong. If their present estimate of character be correct, there *is* no such native tendency to goodness as you suppose, and you are deceived. They are among your best friends, and they have not assumed this new position from any desire to impose on others; but they have been constrained to it because they saw it was true.

Another consideration is, that there is nothing easier than to deceive ourselves in this matter. You have certain traits of character which are in themselves well enough, and which may be commendable, and you exalt them in the place of others which God requires. You have a disposition that is naturally amiable and inoffensive. So has a lamb, and a dove. Is this the love of God? Is that what the law requires? You are honest and upright towards men. Is this the love of the Creator, and is this to be a substitute for repentance and faith? How inconclusive is the reasoning that is secretly going

on in your mind on this subject. ‘I have wronged no *man*, THEREFORE, I am the friend of *God*. I am amiable, accomplished, true, THEREFORE, my want of love to God may be excused. I am kind to others, THEREFORE, I need not pray, and if I neither pray nor worship my Maker, nor love my Redeemer, I shall be saved.’ Is it not possible also to *conceal* offensive points of character from yourselves and from the world? Many an individual is refined and courteous in a circle like that in which you move, who would be a profane man or a gambler, a drunkard or a freebooter, were these restraints thrown off. Nay, I can conceive that a man may appear very courteous, and refined, and virtuous here, and in an hour afterwards, with the dissolute and profane, may evince a totally different character. Much of the virtue of this world is the creation of circumstances, not the result of principle—and is, therefore, no virtue at all. Many a man aims to *conceal* not to *eradicate* the evil of his heart; and his smooth exterior, his plausible address, his winning manners, are the result of that concealment. Years may pass before the hidden fire shall burn, and before the depravity of the soul shall manifest itself by some tremendous deed of open guilt.—Again: we are flattered. Our parents flatter us; our friends do it; we do it ourselves. We love it. Our beauty, our strength, our skill in music, our accomplishments, our learning are praised. Somebody will praise us; and we lay the flattering unction to the soul, and believe it, and feed upon it, and love it. We substitute this in the place of virtue, and forget while we drink it in that the Bible has said that the carnal mind is enmity against God. And it matters not whence it comes, or how valueless it may be in its source, or scarcely how bad may be the intention with which it is done. It is acceptable to us always; it is acceptable to us all. Praise,

“what heart of man  
Is proof against thy sweet seducing charms!  
Praise from the rivelled lips of toothless, bald  
Decrepitude, and in the looks of lean  
And craving poverty, and in the bow  
Respectful of the smutched artificer,  
Is oft too welcome, and may disturb  
The bias of the purpose. How much more,

Poured forth by beauty splendid and polite  
 In language soft as adoration breathes !  
 Ah ! spare your idol ! think him human still.

TASK, B. II.

Another thought. Are you not deceived in your estimate of your own character in regard to the love of virtue. Let me ask a few plain questions. You say you love truth. Why then resist the truth as designed to bear on your own heart and to show you what you are? You are amiable. Why not then love the Lord Jesus Christ? Has there been any one among men more amiable or lovely than he? You love purity. Why not then love God? Is there any one more pure than he? You are aiming to do right. Why then do you not pray in the closet, and in the family, as you know you ought to do? You are not opposed, you say, to God and his religion. Why then do you not embrace his gospel, and avow your attachment to him in the face of the world? Does the child that loves a father neglect his commands? Does he flee from his presence when he calls him? Does he mingle with his enemies, and choose that his name should be with his revilers? You have done no wrong. Will you tell me then why you are afraid to die? Why are you afraid of God and of the judgment seat? What has *innocence* to fear in death, or in the world beyond? What has a guiltless man to dread at the bar of a holy God? You are deceived. The paleness, and the terror, and the alarm of a dying man always prove that there is guilt within, and that he has something to dread *after* death. Few men know themselves. In all communities there is many a man who regards himself as a paragon of humility who is a model of pride; many a one who supposes he has no hostility to the Saviour, who would have joined in the cry "crucify him;" and many a man who supposes that his character is pure and his heart upright, who in other circumstances would show that that heart is a fountain of corruption, and is filled with evil.

II. Men deceive themselves in regard to their real attachments. The remarks which I have to make under this head and the others which follow, will partake of the nature of *illustrations* of the fact already adverted to, that men deceive themselves in regard to their character, and



may be much more brief than the remarks under the first head. Men deceive themselves in regard to their real attachments. They usually flatter themselves that they have no improper attachment to their friends, to their children, to the world, to fashion, to fame, to property, to their pursuits. They think they hold to the doctrines of religion, and that they are not insensible to its claims. They are not infidels; they are not at heart opposed to the gospel. Is this so? Or are they allowing their hearts to impose on themselves?

You think you have no undue attachment to a child. When the great Giver of life takes this child back to himself, are you willing to part with it? Are there no feelings of murmuring when you see that lovely babe beyond human help sinking in death? Is the heart always calm and submissive when the son advancing to manhood—soon to be your pride and your stay, or the daughter blooming like the rose, is suddenly cut down like the flower of the field? Is the eye serene; and is there no murmur tremulous on the lip; or no suppressed complaining in the heart? Does the sufferer always then say “the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord?” Not always thus. “I am thankful,” said one mother, when she lost a lovely child—in her view *then* the most lovely of all her children—“I am thankful that God has done his *worst*.” Another fell in death, and she murmured still. A third also died—and she felt that the Lord had more that he could do—and then, taught to acquiesce, and brought to love him, she cheerfully said, “the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be his holy name.”

You think you have no undue attachment to wealth. How do you feel when you are embarrassed and when others are prospered? When wind, and tide, and fire, and tempest are against you, and when others grow rich? When your property takes to itself wings and flees away, while others are enjoying the smiles of Heaven? How do you feel when you are asked to aid the cause of humanity with a portion of your wealth? How do you estimate that property when compared with the wants of the world? There are the poor, and the ignorant, and the down-trodden whom you might relieve. There is a

dying world in want of schools, and Bibles, and churches, and a preached gospel? There are millions of benighted men; millions under oppression; millions in slavery; millions who are the miserable victims of sensuality and vice—and a portion of your property might aid to set the captive free, and to open the prisons of them that are bound, and to knock off the chains of servitude, and to relieve suffering nations, and to proclaim salvation to the ends of the earth. Do you esteem any or all of these objects as at all comparable in value with the wealth which you hold in your hands? And if you do not, have you not affixed an inordinate estimate to that wealth, and formed an attachment for it which God cannot approve?

You think you have no undue attachment to the world, and that in the influence which that world has over you, you are showing no disrespect to the commands of God. Let me ask you, is any pleasure abandoned because *he commands it*? Is any place of amusement forsaken because *he wills it*? Do you listen to the voice of God when he warns you against the seductive influence of the theatre, the ball-room, and the pursuit of gain, and of ambition? Are they not pursued as if there were no God, and as if you were never to give account?

You suppose you have some attachment to Christians, and to the Christian religion. You would be shocked and offended to be called an atheist, an infidel, a scoffer. You admit the Bible to be true, and mean to be found among the number of those who hold that its doctrines are from Heaven. Yet does the heart never deceive you in this? Is not this the truth—for I make my appeal to your own consciousness? You admit the doctrines of the Bible to be true in *general*; you deny them in *detail*. The doctrine of total depravity as taught in the Bible, and as applicable to yourself—do you believe it? The necessity of regeneration in order to be saved—do you believe it? The fact that you can be saved only by the merits of the Lord Jesus, and not by morals, and by amiableness, and an upright life—do you believe it? The doctrine of the eternal punishment of the wicked—do you believe it? Step by step, and point by point, we might go over the doctrines of the Bible, and as we go along, the heart, if honest, would answer, ‘No,

I believe none of these things. I am not as guilty and corrupt as the Bible says I am; I am not in danger of eternal sorrow; I do not deserve the unending wrath of God;—and the heart has deceived you.

You think you have no particular opposition to the *duties* of religion. But is not this the truth? You admit the obligation *in general*; you deny it *in detail*. Let me ask you, Do you pray? Do you conscientiously read the Bible? Do you repent of your past sins? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you profess his name before men? Do you celebrate his death? Do you take up the cross? Do you cultivate meekness, and spirituality, and heavenly-mindedness? Do you live for heaven, and for eternity, and for God? Step by step, and point by point, we might go over the catalogue of Christian duties, and as we go along the conscience would answer, ‘No; I do none of these things. Not one of the duties of the Christian religion do I perform as I know the Bible requires. Not one am I willing *now* to do.’ The heart has deceived you in this. Am I saying more than your own consciences will bear witness to when I say that there is no argument, and no eloquence that could induce you this night to kneel down before God and pray?

III. In the third place, the heart is deceitful in regard to its power of resisting temptation. In the halcyon days of youth and inexperience, we think that we are proof against all the forms of allurements, and we listen with no pleasureable emotions to those who would warn us of danger. Experience and aged wisdom find it not easy to get and retain the ear of the young while they portray the dangers of the youthful course, and warn against the alluring customs of the world. And the reason is plain. Those whom we would admonish have had no experience; and they suspect no danger. They confide in their own powers; they see before them a smooth ocean on which they expect to glide without danger. A gallant ship with her sails all set leaves the port. She is new; and her virgin sails have not before been fanned by the breeze. The gale springs up, and gently swells all her canvass. Before her is the vast ocean—spread out as if to invite her. On her deck stands the young mariner—fresh from his home; buoyant with hope; his glad eye

looking out on the new scene as the ship dances from wave to wave; and his heart beats with joy. How chilling now; how cold; how incongruous, is it for the weather-beaten seaman—the man of many voyages, to come and tell of rocks, and quicksands, and whirlpools, and furious tempests. How incongruous to *suggest* that the seams may open, or the canvass be stripped to ribbons, or that some unseen current may drift that beautiful vessel into unknown seas, where she may lie becalmed,

“Day after day, day after day,  
With neither breath nor motion;  
As idle as a painted ship,  
Upon a painted ocean.”

So we start on the voyage of life. We flatter ourselves that we are able to meet temptation. We confide in the strength of our principles. We trust to the sincerity of our own hearts. Guileless ourselves—I do not mean *guiltless* in the sense that we have no propensities to evil, but *guileless* in the sense of sincere and confiding—we suspect no fraud in others. Suspicion is not the characteristic of youth. It is the unhappy work of experience; the influence that comes into our hearts, notwithstanding all our efforts to resist it, from long acquaintance with the insincerity of mankind. The world flatters us, and a thousand temptations adapted with consummate skill to the young, allure us. Professed friends meet us on the way and assure us that there is no danger. The gay, the fashionable, the rich, the winning, the beautiful, the accomplished, invite us to tread with them the path of pleasure, and to doubt the suggestions of experience and of age. We feel confident of our own safety. We suppose we may tread securely a little further. We see no danger near. We take another step still, and yet another, thinking that we are safe yet. We have tried our virtuous principles, and thus far they bear the trial. We *could* retreat if we would; we *mean* to retreat the moment that danger comes near. But who knows the power of temptation? Who knows when dangers shall rush upon us so that we cannot escape? There *is* a dividing line between safety and danger. Above thundering Niagara the river spreads out into a broad and tranquil basin.



All is calm, and the current flows gently on, and there even a light skiff may be guided in safety. You may glide nearer and nearer to the rapids, admiring the beauty of the shore, and looking on the ascending spray of the cataract, and listening to the roar of the distant waters, and be happy in the consciousness that you are safe. You may go a little further, and may have power still to ply the oar to reach the bank. But there *is* a point beyond which human power is vain, and where the mighty waters shall seize the quivering bark, and bear it on to swift destruction. So perishes many a young man by the power of temptation. You may drink a social glass, you think, with a friend and be safe. One more glass, and you may be safe still, and another may be taken, you think, without danger. You may go to a theatre once, you suppose, and be safe. You may be pleased, and think you may go again, and be safe still. You are fascinated with the scenery, the action, the sentiment—and you go again. The acting, the sentiment, is *not* such as you saw and heard at the fire-side of your childhood; not such as a mother would love; not quite such as you would wish a sister to see. It is indelicate, as you would once have thought indelicate; and profane, as you now think profane. There are men and women there whom you would not like to see at your father's fire-side, and whom you would not allow to associate with a sister. You will be sensible of less and less horror at the indelicacy and profaneness there. There *is* a point where no young man is safe; and where no unconverted heart is secure from the power of temptation. I need not describe the result. *One* allurements does not stand alone. None have been injured by staying away from such scenes. But O, how many hearts have been broken as the result of a visit to such a place of allurements!

So you may go to a gambling room, you suppose, and be safe. Of playing yourself you have no intention. Of the place, the business you may have a deep abhorrence. But your friend plays and wins; and plays and wins again. With the same feelings you may go again. You feel still safe. You have no desire, no intention to play. But for pastime you venture a trifle—and win—and you win again and again, and begin to play deep—and you

begin to lose—and are in debt—and wish to recover all—and are now seized by fiends in human shape who designed to devote you to poverty, to despair, to cursing, and to hell.—When Elisha the prophet met Hazael bearing a present to him from Ben-hadad of Syria, the man of God fixed his eyes upon the messenger, and wept. Why dost thou weep? said Hazael. Because, said the prophet, I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel. Their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword. But what, said Hazael, is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing? 2 Kings, viii. 13. Scarce had he turned from the prophet before he murdered the King his master, and ascended the throne, and was all that the prophet said he would be.

And who can tell what he would be if subjected to temptation? Look upon the wretched and abandoned profligate. See the ruined gambler, the counterfeiter, the drunkard, the murderer. Once they were what you are, confident in the strength of their virtue, with hearts bounding with hope, and with eyes bright with the visions of future honor and bliss. Far from the scenes of riot and dissipation; far from the gambling room, the theatre, the house of her “whose steps take hold on hell,” is the path of safety. And if I address any who are now sailing along on the stream of pleasure, thinking that no danger is near, I conjure you while manly strength remains, to ply the oar and to reach the bank. As you value health, property, reputation, usefulness, heaven; as you value the happiness of father, mother, sister, wife, or child; as you regard the tears which a broken-hearted mother may shed over your grave, or the sorrows of a father whose heart may burst with swelling grief; as you would not bring down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave or your own soul to death, I conjure you never to approach again the place of temptation. Be sufficiently independent to act the man. Let conscience, and reason, and the law of God direct your steps; and with virtue, reputation, happiness, heaven in the eye, dare to say to temptation and the tempter, ‘Henceforward I heed not your voice. *I will be a man.* I walk no more in the ways of sin. I

tread no farther the path where many have fallen to rise no more.'

IV. Once more. The heart deceives itself in its promises of reformation and amendment. I cannot dwell on this. Permit me to ask of you, how many resolutions you have formed to repent and be a Christian—all of which have failed. How many times have you promised yourself, your friends, and God, that you would forsake the ways of sin and live for heaven—all of which have failed. How often have you fixed the *time* when you would do this? And yet that time has come and gone unimproved. At one time you resolved to repent and be a Christian when you had enjoyed a little longer the ways of sin. God granted you the desires of your heart, but the time has not come when you were willing to be his. At another time you resolved to repent should you be laid on a sick bed. You were sick, but you then found—what you will always find—that a sick bed is no good place to prepare to die. Then you resolved, and in solemn covenant promised God, that if you should recover you would devote your life to him. You rose from your bed, and you forgot him. At one time you resolved to be a Christian when you should be settled in life; then when you had more leisure; then when the cares of life should cease. At twenty, at thirty, at forty, at fifty years of age you may have resolved to turn to your Maker should you reach those periods—but on some of you the snows of winter have fallen, and yet a deceitful and a deceived heart is pointing you to some future period still. It deceived you in childhood; it deceived you in youth; it deceived you in manhood; it deceives you in old age. It has always deceived you as often as you have trusted it in all circumstances of life—and yet you trust it still. It has deceived you oftener than you have been deceived by any and all other things—oftener than we are deceived by the false friend; oftener than the traveller is deceived by his faithless guide; oftener than the caravan is deceived by the vanished brook; oftener than the bow deceives the hunter; oftener than you have been deceived by any and all other men. There is no man whom you have not trusted more safely than your own heart; no object in nature that has been as faithless

as that:—and I appeal to you if it is not deceitful above all things.

In conclusion, I make three remarks :

(1.) There is danger of losing the soul. The heart has deceived you in all the journey of life thus far ; it has deceived you on all the points pertaining to salvation ; it is still deceiving you. It has deceived you about your own character ; about your real objects of attachment ; about your power to resist temptation ; about your resolutions for eternity. It has deceived you whenever and wherever you have trusted it on these points, and it is now deluding you with vain promises and expectations about the future. What shall hinder it from playing this same game till death shall close the scene, and you shall go to a world where delusions are unknown ?

(2.) The heart of man is wicked. You have a heart which you yourself cannot trust. It has always deceived you. You have a heart which your fellow-men will not trust. They secure themselves by notes, and bonds, and mortgages, and oaths, and locks, and bolts ;—and they will not trust you without them. You have a heart which God regards as deceitful and depraved, and in which he puts no confidence, and which he has declared to be “desperately wicked.” But who *does* confide in the heart of man ? The tempter, the seducer, the Devil. The tempter knows that men may be led astray. The seducer knows that allurements may be presented so strong as to undermine our virtue, and lead us to ruin. And the great adversary of God, practised in wiles, and understanding fully the human heart, knows that that heart may be led into sin. And I ask whether that heart in which neither God nor man ; in which neither we nor our friends can put confidence, is a heart that is good and pure ? Is it such a heart as is fitted for heaven ? I answer no—and you respond to my own deep conviction when I say it must be renewed.

(3.) Finally, I would warn you affectionately of danger. I would conjure you to wake from these delusions to the reality of your condition. I would beseech you to look at truth, and be no longer under the control of a deceived and a deceitful heart. Life is too short to be playing such a game. There are too great interests at stake



to be thus the prey of delusions. Death and the grave cannot be made a foot-ball with which to amuse ourselves; nor are heaven and hell mere creations of the fancy. Of all places, the earth is the least proper to be made the scene of deceptions. In the world of despair—if delusion were possible—it would mitigate pain, and would endanger nothing. Nothing there can be worse, even in imagination, than the reality. But here every thing is at stake. You play and sport on the verge of a precipice from which if you fall you rise no more. Death is real; and the grave is real; and hell is real; and the judgment is real. Not one of them is the work of fancy; not one can be changed by the imagination. It will be no fiction when you come to die; it will be no delusive pageant when you shall stand at the judgment seat; it will be no day-dream when you shall hear the Judge solemnly say, “Depart accursed into everlasting fire.” You pass on through scenes of affecting reality to another world. O go not to awake first to the reality of the scene when these eyes shall have closed on all the vain pageantry of this world, and when you will have awaked from your delusion only to say “the harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and I am not saved.”

## SERMON V.

### INDECISION IN RELIGION.

1 Kings xviii. 21. And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God follow him: But if Baal, then follow him.

WHEN these words were uttered, the ten tribes had revolted, and had established a kingdom by themselves. The throne was occupied by Ahab, a prince distinguished for wickedness and impiety. The worship of Baal had become the common religion of the kingdom of Israel, and there were comparatively few worshippers of the true God. Elijah assembled the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel for the purpose of testing, by a public miracle, the question whether JEHOVAH or Baal were the proper object of adoration. In regard to the state of things existing at that time in Israel, we may remark—

(1.) That a large portion of the nation was decidedly inclined to the worship of Baal. That worship was patronized and countenanced by the king and queen; probably by most of the royal family, and, as a matter of course almost, by the mass of the people. So extensively did that worship prevail, that it was easy to assemble no less than four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal on this occasion, to make a public trial of the question whether JEHOVAH or Baal were the true God.

(2.) There were some who were as decidedly the friends of JEHOVAH. They were indeed few in number. Elijah thought himself alone; and was greatly disheartened at the thought that he was the only one left who acknowledged the true God. Yet God said to him that he had reserved to himself seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal, (1 Kings xix. 18; Rom. xi. 4); thus proving, that even in the most discouraging circumstances, and in the widest prevalence

of irreligion, there may be more real piety than the desponding hearts of the few friends of God may suppose.

(3.) There was another, and evidently a large class, that was undecided. This was the class which Elijah particularly addressed in the text. They were hesitating and doubting; they were undetermined whether to acknowledge JEHOVAH as the true God, or whether to bow down before the image of Baal. What was the ground of their hesitancy we are not informed, but it is not improper to suppose, that on the one hand they were inclined to the worship of Baal because it was the popular religion; because it was patronized by the sovereign; because the way to office might have depended on conformity to it; and because it imposed few restraints, and permitted great license in the indulgence of corrupt passions;—and, on the other hand, there was the remembrance of what JEHOVAH had done for their fathers; there was the conviction of conscience that his religion was pure and true; and there were his solemn commands to worship him alone, and his well-known denunciations against idolatry.

This class particularly Elijah addressed. He called on them to come to a decision. He demanded that they should make up their minds, and come to some settled determination as to the course which they would pursue. He urged that if JEHOVAH was the true God, it was but reasonable that they should devote themselves with undivided affection to him. If Baal, it was *as* reasonable that the worship that was due to him should not be withheld, and that they should not approach his altars with divided hearts and with wavering minds. JEHOVAH or Baal, whichever was the true God, would be better pleased with settled views and determined purposes, than with irresolution and indecision, and with a system of worship that vibrated between one and the other.

The doctrine which is, therefore, taught in this passage, is the unreasonableness of indecision on the subject of religion. In discoursing on it, my object will be,

- I. To classify those who are thus undecided; and
- II. To urge some reasons for an immediate decision.

1. Those who are thus undecided may be regarded as comprising the following classes.

(1.) Those who are undecided about the truth or reality of religion at all, or of any system of religion. They embrace no system; they make no pretensions to any religion. They are lookers-on in the world, and observers of the various forms and systems of worship, professing liberality to all, and manifesting a preference for none. They are undetermined whether Christianity is preferable to infidelity; whether Protestantism is preferable to the Papacy; whether deism is preferable to atheism; and whether any form of paganism is not as safe as the purest form of Christianity. They are not decided whether the system which proclaims that all men will be saved is not as likely to be true as that which proclaims that "the wicked shall be turned into hell"; nor are they determined in their own minds whether it is not as well to depend on their own morality as to depend on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. They conform to any mode of worship only because it is the prevailing form, and for the same reason that they would have been Mussulmen at Mecca or Constantinople; worshippers of Confucius in China; followers of Zoroaster in Persia; or atheists in Paris, amidst the scenes of the French revolution.

(2.) A second class is composed of those who hesitate between Christianity and infidelity. On the one hand, there are all the happy effects which Christianity produces; and all the arguments from miracle and prophecy in its favor; and all the influences of education; all the convictions of conscience, and all the offers which it makes of an eternal heaven;—and on the other, there is all the force of the difficulties which are acknowledged to exist in the Bible; all the reluctance to embrace its great and incomprehensible mysteries; all the influence of pride of heart, and the love of fancied independence; all the power of corrupting passion, and the desire of indulgence in sin, prompting the individual to cast off the restraints of religion; all the love of the world; all the force of the fact that multitudes of the great, the rich, the scientific, are understood to have cast off Christianity, or to have doubts about its truth. And multitudes, therefore, are in a state of avowed or secret doubt, and are hesitating whether Christianity be true or false, and whe-



ther they shall embrace that system, or some form of the almost infinite number of forms in which infidelity manifests itself in this land.

(3.) There are those, as a third class, who are awakened to see their guilt, and who are hesitating about giving up their hearts to God. They see that they are sinners. They know that they are exposed to the wrath of God. They have no doubt of the necessity and the importance of religion. They have no doubt of the truth of Christianity. They have long thought seriously on the subject; have often prayed and wept; and have often desired, as they supposed, to be Christians. Many of them have been trained in pious families, and in the Sabbath-school; and they have often, and long, and deeply felt that it was necessary for them to be born again. But they hesitate. There is the love of some sin which they are not willing to abandon; or there is the fear of shame, and the apprehension of derision; or there is a secret unwillingness to be saved by the mere mercy of God, and the merit of the Saviour; or there is a disposition to defer it to some future period; or there is deep absorption in the business of the world; or there are the allurements of youthful pleasures; or there is the withering influence of some infidel companion that ridicules the anxiety of the soul, and poisons the mind, and is the means of often grieving the Spirit of God.

(4.) A fourth class is made up of those who are constantly forming resolutions to attend to the subject of religion, and to become decided Christians. Probably most of those who are here to-day, who have travelled any considerable distance on the journey of life, can recollect many such resolutions seriously formed, and as often disregarded and broken. They can recall many periods of their youth, when their minds were tender, and when they were almost resolved to be Christians; many periods in sickness or in other afflictions, when they proposed, and solemnly promised to God that they would live to his glory; many times under the preaching of the gospel, when they purposed to forsake their sins, and give themselves to God. But they are still undecided. Their vows, and purposes, and promises, are forgotten. Their love of the world is too strong for

them to forsake it yet, and they too much desire the indulgence of sin to abandon it, and live a life of piety. Notwithstanding all these resolutions, they are to-day as undecided as they were years ago, and perhaps during many years they have come no nearer to a decision.

(5.) A fifth class is made up of those who are undecided about making a profession of religion. That it is a duty they feel and admit; and it is a duty which they often purpose to perform. Yet one opportunity passes by after another, and they are not prepared; one communion occurs after another, and they still hesitate. There is the admission that it is a duty; there is a settled purpose to do it at some period of life; but there is, on the other hand, the fear of the world, or the love of some habit that could not be indulged in consistently with a profession of Christianity, or there is the plea that they are unworthy, or that they would not be able to adorn their profession; or there is the ever-ready plea—a plea, alas! answered with so much difficulty—that many professors do little honor to their high calling. Thus life wears away. One communion season passes after another; and one year rolls on after another, and in the mean time there is no decision, nor is there any advance made towards a decision. Many an individual can look back over a dozen or a score of years, and find that during that period he has made no advance towards a decision; and some even on whom the snows of age have fallen, have been agitating this question during the better part of a century, and are now going down to the grave still halting between two opinions. In the mean time their name is with the world, and their combined example is the argument to which the wicked appeal, that men may be as good out of the church as in it, and that if such persons of known and established character, venerable by age, and respected for their virtues, are safe unconnected with the church, others may be also. And there is no art which Satan practices that evinces more skill and cunning than in retaining such persons on what is deemed neutral ground, and in preventing, by a thousand pleas, their giving their names and their influence to the cause of decided piety, and to God.

These are the persons whom I wish to address. I have classified them, in order that there may be no mistake as to who I mean; and to each class, and each individual, I wish to address some remarks, showing the unreasonableness of remaining in this condition, and urging them to an immediate decision—either one way or the other. This was my

II. SECOND OBJECT. Under this head, assuming mainly the form of direct address, I shall urge several considerations as reasons why a decision should be made without delay.

(1.) The first is, that our great interests, if we have any great interests, or any that are much worth regarding, are on the subject of religion. If this *be* so, then religion is the last thing that should remain unsettled and undetermined. It can make very little difference to a man, whether he is rich or poor; honored or despised; sick or well; a bondman or a slave. Whether there is an eternity or not, these things are comparatively of trifling moment. How soon is the most exquisite earthly pleasure passed! The charms of the sweetest melody, how soon it dies away on the ear! The tenderest ties of friendship, how soon are they severed! The most splendid mansion, how soon it must be left! The widest reputation, how soon must we cease to enjoy it! And so with the bitterest grief, the keenest sorrow, the most agonizing pain, how soon it is all gone! Whether we are rich or poor, honored or dishonored, life is like a vapor that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. Of what importance can it be to the vapor that you see in the morning as it lies on the mountain side, whether it be admired by a few more, or a few less mortals; or whether it roll a little higher, or sink a little lower, since it must soon vanish in the beams of the morning sun? So of the vapor of life. The cloud that you see lie along the western sky, as the sun sinks behind the hills, so gorgeous, so changing, so beautiful, of what importance can it be whether a few more or a few less tints be painted there; or whether a few more or a few less eyes gaze upon it—for the darkness of midnight will soon conceal it all. So with the beauty and the gorgeousness of life. So with your dress, your equipage, your



furniture, your dwellings. The night of death cometh, and will shut all from your view.

If man *has* any great interests, they lie beyond the tomb. If he has none there, life is a bubble, a vapor, a gorgeous illusion, a changing cloud, a mist on the mountain side. And if this *be so*, it is as well for a man to make up his mind to it, and to eat and drink, for to-morrow he dies. Then he should *ascertain* this, and have no trouble about the future. He should settle the question, and make as much of luxury and pastime; of the feast and the dance; of the theatre and the ball-room; of riotous indulgence and of ambition, as possible. He should so settle it as to have no trouble from his conscience in the most riotous pleasures; no fear of God in the scenes of sensual indulgence and mirth; no fear of hell while he revels on the bounties which chance may spread around him; no superstitious apprehensions of a judgment-seat while he rolls in dissipation, and tramples on the rights of others. For if there is no eternity, it is utter folly to act with reference to it; if there is no hell, it is folly to be restrained by any such unfounded apprehension; if there is no God, then men should not be disturbed by any superstitious belief that his eye is upon them. But if there *is* a God, a heaven, a hell, an eternity, then life becomes a very different thing. Then man's great interests are transferred at once to the regions beyond the grave. Then life, now so busy and active, becomes so trifling that it may be said that *ALL* his interests are there. The great things which are to affect us most deeply do not cease, but just commence, when we lie down on a bed of death. There, amidst the darkness of the dying scene, existence is just begun; and there we are just entering on the scenes which must *thrill* through the soul, and absorb all its powers forever. Then the eyes turned away from the gorgeousness of the illusive scene here—the vain pageant of this world—are opened upon the realities of the judgment-bar; the throne of God; and the splendors of the unchanging world. Then the ear made deaf by dying to the charms of sweet music, is opened to the sweet strains that float forever over the plains of heaven, or the groans and sighs of the world of wo. Then the soul, insensible longer to the comforts



or the sorrows of this life ; no longer affected by the pleasures of friendship, or the evils of poverty, want, or pain, is made alive at once to the bliss of eternal love in heaven, or to the deep sorrows of that world of despair that shall endure forever. And if this be so, then whatever other interests you may neglect, assuredly *this* should not be disregarded. Whatever else may be undecided, this should be settled. If a choice were to be made, assuredly better to let health suffer than the soul die ; better to be a bankrupt than be damned ; better be without reputation here, than to meet the ever-enduring wrath of God ; better suffer your name to be blackened and calumniated, than to sink beneath the avenging arm of Jehovah ; better let men kill the body, than to fall unprepared into the hands of that God who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

(2.) A second consideration is, that you would suffer no other matter to remain undecided as this does. If you are sick, you leave no means untried to secure returning health. If you were in as much danger of becoming a bankrupt as you are of losing the soul, you would give yourself no rest until, if possible, you should feel yourself safe. If you had a richly-freighted ship at sea, and there was as much danger that she and her cargo would be lost as there is that your soul will, and there were any doubt about the insurance, you would lose no time in making the proper investigation. Your business, your property, your reputation, you would not leave as you do the concerns of the soul ; and if you did, it would be impossible for any man to become rich, or respected, or honored in the world. There is no other interest so unsettled as your religious interests ; there are no other opinions so unfixed ; no other purposes so vascillating. You leave no title-deeds, no investments, no stocks, no bonds, no notes in the same unsettled condition. and there is not a single department of your business ; a single scheme or plan of life that is not more carefully looked at, and better known than the question about eternity. Were there this day half the danger that you would come to poverty, that there is that you will sink down to hell, no words would be wanting or needed to induce you to examine your prospects, and contemplate your condi-

tion. Nay, have you never witnessed this fact? Have you not seen a man yesterday in affluence, with the luxuries and comforts of the world around him; have you not seen that man, when a blast of misfortune has come over him, pale, and agitated, and alarmed; have you not seen how sleep has forsaken his pillow, and how he has given himself no rest under the threatening storm? And then have you not seen on the subject of religion, when the great interests of the soul are urged, and his danger set forth, how unconcerned, how listless, how regardless of all the proofs of danger; how unmoved by even the conviction that there all was unsettled, and in danger!

(3.) A third consideration is, that it is *possible* to come to a decision on this subject; and if possible, an affair of so much importance should not remain undecided. It is possible for a man to find out whether there is any religion; whether the Christian religion is true or false; whether the true religion is preferable to false religion; whether Christianity is preferable to infidelity; whether there is a God, a Saviour, a heaven, and a hell. It is possible for a man to know whether there is such a thing as the new birth, and the pardon of sin; and whether there is, or is not, any such thing as joy and peace in believing the gospel. I say it is possible, for the following among other reasons: (1.) Because it is as easy for a man to understand his own character on the subject of religion as it is on other subjects. In the nature of the case there is no more reason why a man should not know whether he loves God, than there is whether he loves an earthly father or friend. (2.) Because thousands and millions, with no better advantages than you have, have been enabled to settle the question, and to arrive at decided views. They have *so* settled it that they have been enabled to look to the grave with peace, and to heaven with triumph; so settled it that doubt has fled, and left their minds tranquil and serene. (3.) Because it is not reasonable to believe that God would leave this matter to uncertainty, or put it beyond our power to arrive at some settled views on the subject of religion. No man should charge it on him unless he has positive demonstration that he has put it utterly beyond his power to arrive at any determined views about his own character, his Crea-

tor, and the world to come. (4.) Because he has given us *reason* for this very purpose, and endowed us with faculties for investigating the whole subject, and if a man will not employ his reason, he must answer it to God. (5.) Because he has given us the Bible for this very end; and has, in the Bible, given us all the information which is needful in regard to his own character and ours; to the plan of salvation; to death and hell. No man can pretend that there is not in the Bible knowledge enough, if it is true, about God and the future state;—and whether it is true or not, a man may, if he chooses, be able to understand. And (6.) Because in the Bible he expressly calls on us to decide; to take a stand; to be settled in our views. Thus in the text, “If JEHOVAH be God, then follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” Thus Moses, “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; THEREFORE choose life.” And every where in the Bible, God calls on men to be decided, and firm, and settled in their views on the subject of religion.

Now I know it is possible for men to be vacillating and unsettled on the subject of religion. But if they are, it is not the fault of God. If they have no settled views, it must be traced to something else than to a want of means to obtain them. There is a ship, suppose, in a dark night at sea. There are rocks and quicksands near. There are currents that are setting towards the shore, and the wind is rising, and every thing indicates a tempest. There is a chart and a compass near the helmsman. But he is unsettled in his views and his aims. He will neither look at his compass nor his chart, but he begins to be distressed, and he turns his helm this way and that way, and he guides his ship by caprice, and she moves in a zig-zag course, and his hope is chance, and a few more moments in this way will dash the ill-fated vessel on a rock. Meantime many a mariner has gone calmly through those seas, and stood out with a bold front and swelling canvass to the ocean, and seen the tempest rise without alarm, and been unmoved when cloud has been piled on cloud, and the ocean been lashed into foam, and the lightnings have played, and the thunder has rolled along the deep. Human life is a voyage; and men act



in reference to that, *not* as the skilful mariner does on the deep, but as *no* mariner ever did, or ever will. They have the chart and the compass in their own dwellings, but they will not look at them; and they are unsettled in their views, and when the storm arises, and danger deepens, they are alarmed, and when they die their hopes become a wreck.

(4.) The fourth consideration is, that the things about which a man is to decide are few in number, and may easily be determined. In our text, it was a simple choice which was to be made. There were but two objects before the mind, and the call was to determine which of them was to be acknowledged as God. So it is still. Were the question what selection a man would make among the rabble of Pagan gods, it would be more difficult to determine. But the questions which you are to settle are all of them very simple, and may be stated in few words. They are, whether you will worship *JEHOVAH* or Mammon—for both cannot be served. Whether you will depend on Jesus Christ for salvation, or not—for you cannot depend on him and your own morality. Whether you will forsake your sins or not—for you cannot be saved while you adhere to them. Whether you will live to God, or to yourselves—for you cannot do both. Whether you will give your heart to the Redeemer or not—for you cannot be saved until this is done. Whether you will renounce the works of the flesh and the devil, and come out from the world, and abandon its vices and its gaieties or not—for both cannot be followed. Now, these questions are very simple. The choice here lies in a very narrow compass. The main points require little investigation, and the mind *may be* settled at once. Why should a man hesitate on any one of them? Why suppose that there was any thing peculiarly mysterious or difficult in regard to these enquiries? What is the necessity for delaying it from day to day, and even from year to year? These are the questions which *in fact* are before the mind. And these are the points, and no other, on which the mind hesitates, and is in doubt. The perplexity is here in these practical matters, and not in any imaginary metaphysical difficulty or abstruseness in



the questions which are involved. And this leads me to state, as a

(5.) Fifth consideration, that this state of mind must be one that is infinitely displeasing to God. What are the feelings of a father, if he learns that a child is seriously pondering the question whether he shall or shall not love and obey him; whether he shall or shall not prefer his father's good name to his disgrace, his father's society to the society of the unprincipled and the vile, his father's dwelling to the gambling room, and to the tavern, and the house of infamy? What would be his feelings should he learn that that son has been debating these questions in his own mind for weeks or years; that he is able to come to no settled decision on the subject; that he becomes more and more perplexed about it; and that in the mean time he is *in fact* spending his nights with the infamous, and is rioting on his father's beneficence, and abusing his credulity and good nature? Now, in like manner, it is scarcely possible to conceive a state of mind more wicked than a serious and protracted examination of the question when it is fairly brought before a man, whether he shall love God or hate him; whether he shall continue to reject the Saviour and crucify him afresh, or embrace him; whether he shall serve his Creator and keep his laws, or whether he shall defile himself with every form of abominable pollution and sin. *Why should a man agitate such a question at all?* And if it occurs to him, why not take some measures to settle it, and come to some fixed views in regard to it? Better a thousand times that it be settled *any way* than to be a question which a man is agitating from week to week, and from year to year.

(6.) A sixth consideration is, that you will never be in circumstances more favorable for a decision than the present. If there were any prospect that God would send a new revelation more complete than the present, or if his word did not contain all the light which we have reason to expect, or which we needed, the case would be different. But of any such new revelation there is no prospect; and there is as little necessity as there is a prospect of it. You have *all* that can ever shed light on your path; all that will ever be given you to aid you in coming

to a decision. The word of life is in your dwellings and in your hands; the lamp of salvation shines on your way. There will be no new prophet sent into the world; there will be no new miracle; no voice will be uttered from heaven to remove your perplexity; and the dead will not be raised to resolve your doubts. You have Moses, and the prophets, and the apostles, and the Redeemer; and *were* the dead to rise, if you will not hear the risen Son of God, you would not be persuaded though a man should come now from the tomb.

What prospect is there that there will be any increased facility for coming to a decision on the subject? That aged man, venerable already by years, whose mind is now undecided—what increased advantages will he ever have for coming to a decision? Will his mind ever be clearer, his reason more powerful, his conscience more quick, his perception of the truth more vivid? Does he not see that the powers of nature are decaying, and that memory will soon fail, and his mind become weakened and bewildered? And does he not see that his sands are few in number, and that very soon he must be removed to a world where this cannot be a subject of deliberation? That man in middle life—will he ever be in circumstances more favorable for a decision? His powers are mature and active; he cannot plead that he is urged on by the passions of youth; and he labors not yet under the apathy, the imbecilities, and the infirmities of age. He can look reasonably for no greater strength of mind; no greater tenderness of conscience; no more solemn appeals than God is now making to him. Think you, that amidst the infirmities of advanced years, it will be a more favorable time to come to a decision on the subject than the present? And how know you that you will live to advanced years? And who has given you a right to serve Mammon now, with the purpose to serve God hereafter; to devote your best powers to the service of sin and the world, with the design to give to God the miserable remnant of your days, in an enfeebled, and discontented, and peevish old age, when you can do no honor to religion, and no service to the world? Can it be unknown to you, that as the effect of just such a purpose as this, many a man grieves away the Spirit of God; is

given up to the sordid love of gain ; becomes callous to the appeals of the gospel ; becomes a comfortless and a peevish old man ; lives without usefulness, and dies without hope ? And that interesting young man, or young female—can they have a more favorable time to decide this question than now—*TO-DAY* ? Will there be a time when the mind will be more tender, more susceptible of serious impressions, more awake to the importance of the subject ? Will there be a time when they will be more free from care, and anxiety, and concern about this world ? Can there be a period when it will be more *proper to determine* and settle definitely the course that shall be pursued through life ? When a new and gallant ship, with her sails all set, and her masts all firm, and her movement beautiful upon the waters, becomes ready for a distant voyage on a sea full of rocks and mighty currents, when is the proper time to *determine* what course shall be steered ? When she has committed herself to the mercy of winds and waves to try her strength in buffeting them, and has been tossed on unknown seas, or when she leaves the port ? Shall her master steer for some distant port, and lay down her course, and pursue it amidst all the storms that may howl, or shall the vessel start forth in her pride, and dance from wave to wave, until she strikes suddenly upon a rock ? And when, my young friend, is the best time for *you* to be decided on the subject of religion ? When you *start* on the voyage of life. Before the tempests shall beat, and the winds howl. Before you drift into unknown seas. Before you dash upon the rock. Now is the time to settle this great question. To-day is the proper period to determine whether you will be for God or for the world ; a Christian or an infidel ; a candidate early ripe for heaven, or a candidate early ripe for hell.

(7.) I add but one other consideration. The present is the only time which you may have to decide this point. To-morrow may find you in another world. To-morrow *God* may have decided the question forever. This long delay, this hesitancy, this indecision may provoke his wrath ; and in judgment he may come forth and cut you down as a cumberer of the ground. You *cannot* remain always as you are. There must be a decision ; and if



that decision is not made by a voluntary preference for God, it will be made by a removal to a world where it will not be a subject of deliberation. Death will close this vacillating scene. Death will clear up the doubts from the mind. Death will fix that which is unfixed; determine that which is undetermined; and render changeless that which is now fluctuating as the waves of the sea.

In view, now, of all these considerations, I call on you this day to take your stand; to make up your mind to one course or another; to resolve to serve God or to be his avowed and settled foe; to be a Christian, or to cast in your name and influence with sin, and against Jesus Christ; to subscribe with your own hand to this fixed purpose of life, whatever it may be; and to cast the die for time and eternity. I call on you to make a choice. I appeal to you to settle this question. I apprize you that it will be easier to settle it now than it will be on a dying bed. I ask that it may be settled on those seats; and in the name of my God and yours, I solemnly warn every one against leaving this house to-day without having made up his mind definitively on this subject. If JEHOVAH be God, then follow him; if Baal, then follow him; if Mammon, then follow him; if Bacchus, then follow him. If Jesus Christ be the Redeemer of the world, then embrace him. But if there be no Saviour, then *settle* the point that you have no Saviour, and that, in your view, the world is without a Redeemer. If the Bible be a revelation from heaven, then embrace its offers, and cling to its promises. But if there be no revelation, then yield yourself to the miserable darkness of your own reason, and give no credit to the Bible as having any claims to your belief or homage. If there be a heaven, resolve here, and now, and in the presence of God, that you will seek it as the grand purpose of the soul; if there be a hell, resolve here, and now, and before God, that you will never mingle in its groans, and gnash your teeth with its pain;—if there be neither, then go—go, miserable creature of a day—go, vapor of morning dew—go, wretched dweller in a world of sin and pain; go, thou who hast no prospect of life everlasting; who hast no hope of existence beyond the grave; who hast no God and no Saviour—go, “eat and drink, for to-morrow you die!”



## SERMON VI.

### THE REASONS WHY MEN ARE NOT CHRISTIANS.

Luke xiv. 18. I pray thee have me excused.

It is worth every man's while to ascertain the exact reason why he is not a Christian. It is to be presumed that he who is not a Christian has some reason for remaining in his present state, or that there is some cause why he does not embrace the offers of the gospel which are pressed so constantly on his attention. If he has any good reason—any such as exempts him from the obligation resting on other men to give their hearts to God, it would be well for him distinctly to understand it. It would be well also to enquire whether that on which he is relying is in fact a substantial reason, and is such as will abide the investigations of the last day. If a man has a good reason for not being a Christian, it is such as will meet with the approbation of God, and will admit him to heaven without reliance on the merits of the Saviour—for what is a sufficient reason now, will be a sufficient reason then; what will be valueless then, is worthless now.

It is a part of my duty to search out the causes why men are not Christians, and to endeavor to remove them. Doing the best that I can to learn those causes, I am to come and do the best that I can to remove them; and where I am convinced that those reasons are not solid, to attempt to show men why they are not so. Such an attempt requires candor on your part; kindness and fidelity on mine. I propose, therefore, at this time, to submit to you the result of my reflections and observation on this subject; and my remarks will be confined to two points—the causes or reasons why men are not Christians; and the enquiry whether those causes are satisfactory.

1. Our first point relates to the causes or reasons why men are not Christians; or in other words, why they wish to be excused from being Christians—which is the form in which it is presented in the text.

There is something remarkable in the aspect which the subject assumes on the first view of it. Men ask to be *excused*, as if it were a matter of favor. It is natural to ask, *from what?* From a rich banquet, says the parable from which my text is taken. From the hope of heaven through Jesus Christ. From loving God, and keeping his commandments. From having the peace of mind of which all who are Christians partake; from the support in trial which religion indubitably furnishes to those that love it; from the consolation on a bed of death which religion gives, and from the prospect of immortal glory beyond. From that which is fitted to make a man more useful, respected, and beloved in life; remembered with deeper affection when he is dead; honored forever in heaven. From that which will take from him no property; inflict no pain; create no remorse; cause no anguish; and never produce a sigh. From that which would be invaluable to him in the various circumstances of trial to which he is subjected in common with other men in this life, and which perhaps he will admit is indispensable to his immortal happiness beyond the grave. If it were from poverty and disgrace; from anguish of spirit and remorse; from the loss of the favor of friends, and of the world, we could easily understand why he would wish to be excused. But when we search for the reasons why a man wishes to be excused from that which will promote his own best interest in this world, and forever; from that which he needs, and knows he needs, and which all his nature pants and sighs for; from that which gives the brightest ornament of character when living, and the sweetest consolation to his friends when dead, it is necessary that we look deeper that we may know the true reason. It is an anomaly in the character of man.

In searching for the causes or reasons why men wish to be excused from becoming Christians, I may be allowed to suggest that they are often under a strong temptation to conceal those which are real, and to suggest others which will better answer their immediate purpose. My idea is, that the *real* cause is not always avowed, and that men are strongly tempted to suggest others. The

actual reason may be such as, on many accounts, a man would have strong reluctance to have known. It may be such as would make it easy to answer it; or such as would be likely to be a very mortifying avowal, and which would be rather a publication of guilt than a reason for not being a Christian; and there is, therefore, a strong temptation for a man, when hard pressed with the claims of duty, to resort to statements which will make it more difficult to reply. A man that is proud, or sensual, or ambitious, or profane, or who has embarked in some yet unexecuted plan of iniquity, would be slow to avow these as reasons why he does not become a Christian—though these may be in fact the real causes. He would be under a strong temptation to suggest, and would be likely to suggest, some such reasons as the following. That he has no ability to repent and believe the gospel. That the heart is changed by the power of God, and that it is a work entirely beyond his control. That God has determined, by an unalterable decree, the number of those who will be saved, and that any efforts of his cannot change the fixed purpose of God. That if he is to be saved he will be, and that at all events he is so dependent and so helpless, he must wait until God shall interpose and renew his heart. These objections, though not the real ones, are embarrassing, and difficult to be answered. They involve perplexing questions, and those which we admit we cannot always instantly solve. And since this *is* so, there is a strong temptation to suggest them, even where they are not the real causes, and it is not uncharitable to suppose that they may be sometimes urged when the real causes would be wholly different.

Supposing myself that these are not the actual reasons at work to prevent men from becoming Christians, I shall now proceed to state what I suppose are; and shall submit what I have to say to your candid attention.

The grand reason why men are not Christians, as I understand it, is the opposition *of the heart* to religion; that mysterious opposition that can be traced back through all hearts, and all generations, up to the great apostacy—the fall of Adam. All who have become Christians have felt the power of this native opposition to holiness, and have been willing to confess, that in their case, this was

the reason why they did not sooner yield to God. It would be easy, I think, to prove that the same thing exists in all other hearts, and that it is not possible to account for the universal rejection of the gospel on any other supposition. The reason and the conscience of men are on the side of religion. There is no want of evidence of the truth of Christianity ; and such want of evidence is not alleged by many as a reason why they are not Christians. All those who are *disposed* to find evidence of the truth of religion, find enough to be entirely satisfactory to their own minds, and are willing to risk the welfare of their souls on its truth. No man who was *disposed* to serve God, ever went back and rejected Christianity because there was a lack of evidence such as the mind wants in such a case. If this be so, then there is in the human heart something lying *back* of all this that is the reason why men are not Christians ; and that, I need not pause to prove, is the unwillingness of the heart to yield, or the opposition of the soul by nature to God.

But though this is the original difficulty, and is the actual cause why men cannot be persuaded to be Christians, yet it assumes a great variety of forms, and appears in a great variety of aspects. It goes forth like streams that issue from a fountain, and like one of those streams we often see it only at a great distance from the source. It appears sometimes in a form that scarcely seems to savor of opposition, and under an aspect so mild, so sweet, so winning, that you can scarcely believe that all this is connected with opposition of heart to all that is good. Let us now leave this general cause, and ask what are the actual reasons why men are not Christians. They are, as I understand them, such as the following.

(1.) A feeling that you do not *need* salvation in the way proposed in the gospel ; that you do not need to be born again, or pardoned through the merits of the Redeemer. The feeling is, that your heart is by nature rather inclined to virtue than to vice, to good than to evil ; that the errors of your life have been comparatively few, your virtues many ; that the follies which are justly to be charged on you, pertain to less important



points, and do not affect the integrity of your character ; that they were such as were to be expected of those of your age, and of your time of life, and such as are easily pardonable. Your intentions, you would say, have been good. You have been honest and honorable in business. You have been faithful in the discharge of the duties of a professional or an official station. As a merchant, a lawyer, a director of a bank or an insurance company ; as a magistrate, or as a representative in any commercial or civil interest, you are conscious of having acted with good intentions, and your character is above suspicion. You have the deserved reputation of an honest man ; and to that you may have superadded more than mere honesty—you are a large hearted and a liberal man. With the doctrine of total depravity, therefore, on which we feel it our duty so much to insist, you have no sympathy—and you do not, therefore, feel your need of an interest in that religion of which the doctrine of the fall and ruin of man is the very ground-work.

(2.) You suppose that in your case there is no danger of being lost—or not such danger as to make it a subject of serious alarm. This feeling grows out of the former, and is a direct consequence of it. The idea is this, that if the duties of this life be discharged with faithfulness, there can be no serious ground of apprehension in regard to the world to come. You do not regard it as credible that a moral and upright man can be seriously in danger of eternal punishment ; and you expect that the comparatively trivial errors and follies of *your* life will be easily overlooked, and that the future may be not unsafely left without anxiety. *This* would not, you feel, be a popular doctrine. All sincere Christians, and among them some of your best friends, would differ from you in this view. You do not covet the name of an Universalist ; you would rather avoid it. You do not covet controversy ; you would rather avoid it. You do not wish to pain the hearts of your friends by their being made to understand exactly your views on the subject ; you would rather avoid that. Your sentiments, therefore, are locked up in your own bosom, and you do not choose to disclose what is passing in the secret chambers of the soul about

the final doom of man. But while these feelings are cherished, it is evident that you will make no effort to secure your salvation grounded on an apprehension of danger, and we plead in vain that you would give your mind attentively to the subject of religion.

(3.) A third cause operating on a large class is this. It is a secret scepticism about the truth of Christianity. The mind is not settled. The belief is not firm that it is a revelation from heaven. There is a secret doubt as to the truth of the whole system, or there is a special doubt in regard to some of its cardinal and leading doctrines. The mind has been poisoned by some book long since read ; or some conversation long since had with an infidel ; or by some train of reflections which has been allowed to work a channel through the soul in its own way ; or by some lodgement of a doubt there which you have never found time to remove ; and while these doubts exist, of course you will not be a Christian. Yet these you would not avow—except in a circle quite select and confidential. They would be more likely to be disclosed in the literary and scientific circles than at your own fire-side. They will be more likely to be spoken of to your male companion and friend, than in the presence of your sister, or wife, or mother. But you do not intend to avow them. They would be unpopular. The current now is setting strongly in favor of Christianity ; and no literary or scientific man in this country wishes to risk his reputation by publicly avowing any doubts about the truth of the Bible. There is no such avowal. None such would be tolerated. Yet if I have any just knowledge of man, and of the operations of his heart, there are not a few who are deterred from being Christians by some sceptical feeling on some of the points of religion.

(4.) A fourth class are deterred by a feeling that the divine government is unreasonable and severe. In one of his parables, the Saviour has taught us expressly that this operated in preventing a man from doing his duty, and being prepared for his coming. “ I know thee,” said the man who had received the one talent, “ I know thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed ; and

I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth." Matt. xxv. 24, 25. Often it is so with a man now. We ask him to give up his opposition, and to fix on God higher affections than he does on any and all other beings. We ask him to repose such confidence in him as to be willing to give up all into his hands, and to surrender all to his disposal. When we do this, he at once in his own mind recurs to some view which he has of God, rendering him unworthy of that confidence which we entreat him to repose in him. He thinks of his law as rigid and severe; of his government as unnecessarily strict in marking offences; of the arrangement by which he suffered sin and the overflowing deluge of woes that have come in by the fall and fault of one man; of the severity of the sentence by which he dooms the impenitent to an eternal hell;—and he has so long accustomed his mind to such dark views of the divine character, that he sees no beauty in it; feels that if he were to surrender, it would be a forced submission altogether; and *sometimes* feels—though he would not allow himself to express it—as if there was virtue in being alienated from such a being as God. In this state of mind, it is out of the question for a man to become a Christian. Every view which he has of the divine government would stand in the way of his conversion; and argument and entreaty are in vain.

(5.) A fifth class are deterred from being Christians by hostility to some member or members of the church. They have made bargains with them; sold them goods; taken their notes; credited them as they have other men. They have seen, they would say, in one Christian great meanness of spirit; in another a disposition to take every advantage in a bargain; in another who has failed in business, such proofs of dishonesty as would be disgraceful to men who made scarce any pretensions to the principles of common honesty. In another they have had the certain promise of the payment of a debt which has as certainly failed; in another they cannot resist the conviction that he is chargeable with fraud. All this is set down to the credit of Christianity; and it needs no great knowledge of human nature to see



that where this is seen or suspected, men cannot be easily persuaded to embrace a system which produces such fruits. I acknowledge the force of this; or rather I acknowledge that it would be difficult to prevent this effect on my mind. Little conversant as a minister is, and ought to be, with the commercial and political world; and little knowledge as he must of necessity have of the ordinary business transactions of life, I confess I have seen and known enough of this to cease to wonder at its inevitable effect on the minds of upright men of business; and if there is any man of whom I would speak in the language of unrestrained severity, it is of the professing Christian who is mean in the transaction of business; who makes promises only to be broken; who takes advantage of the necessity of others to increase his gains; who borrows money not to be repaid; and who fails in business where falsehood and fraud attend the whole transaction.

(6.) A sixth reason which prevents men from becoming Christians is worldliness—the desire of this world's goods, or pleasures, or honors. Of all the causes which are in operation, this is the most wide-spread and efficient. The great mass of men where the gospel is preached are not infidels or scoffers, nor are they sunk in low and debasing vices. And though many are deterred from being Christians by secret unbelief, or by open vice; by some strong ruling passion which they wish still to indulge, and from which they cannot be induced to part, yet the largest proportion by far of those whom we address is deterred by the love of this world. It is that love of wealth, to accumulate and preserve which occupied all their time and talent, which prevents their studying the word of God, and keeps them from prayer; which leads them often into forbidden paths, trenches on the sacredness of the Sabbath, creates and fosters some of the passions most opposed to the gospel, and which causes them to defer attention to religion to some future period. It is that love of pleasure, of gaiety, of fashion, of admiration, of hilarity, of excitement in the unreal world when they seek enjoyment, that drives away all sober reflection, every serious thought, and every degree



of solicitude about the soul; which closes their Bibles, and which makes prayer a mockery; which is so unlike the spirit of Jesus and his gospel—it is this which operates with a large class in preventing them from becoming Christians. It is that ambition which reigns in the heart of the unrenewed man; that fondness for being known, and praised, and remembered, whether it manifest itself in laying the foundation for lasting literary fame; or for eminence in the learned professions; or for official elevation—it is this which excludes religion from the heart. Where one is deterred from being a Christian by infidelity or gross vice, ten are kept back by one of these manifestations of worldliness. Let the desire of distinction in the ranks of worldliness seize upon the mind, the ambition of going up the steep of fame from one summit to another, until you can stand on the top and look all around and see all the world at your feet, and you bid farewell to every serious thought, and every desire of heaven. Rendered dizzy by the height to which you have already ascended, and excited to climb the still more dangerous eminences which are just above you, and which it seems to be desirable to surmount, the whole soul becomes absorbed in that high enterprize, and all its energies are concentrated there. And so in a family. I know of nothing that is a more deadly foe to religion in a family than this miserable ambition—this desire of entering on terms of intimacy the circles of the aristocracy of fashion and wealth; this desire of leaving the quiet vale of virtue and of peace for the mortifications, and rebuffs, and heart-breakings attending the effort to elbow a family into circles for which God never designed them, and where they can never be either happy or welcome. The great cause why men are not Christians is *worldliness*; and this is the grand reason why so many are excluded from the kingdom of God here and in the skies.

I have not time to go through the statement of the causes as I had intended. I might speak of the dread which men have of the process of conversion; of the fear of the gloom and sadness which they suppose precedes and accompanies regeneration; of the fear of the ridicule and scorn of the world—operating on all minds;

of the love of some sin—some ruling vice—some master passion that has ascendancy over the soul, but which men are ashamed to have known, and to which they are too much attached to surrender it; and of the purpose which is in most hearts to attend to religion at a future time of life. But I have occupied too much time already to speak of these, and it is possible now only to make a few remarks on the second subject proposed.

II. That was, to enquire whether these reasons for not being a Christian are satisfactory. Satisfactory to whom? you may ask. I answer, to conscience and to God. Are they such as are *sufficient* reasons for not loving God?

The duty of loving God with all the heart, is the first duty recommended to men by every precept of natural and revealed religion. The duty of repentance is enjoined by all that is sacred in divine authority, and is responded to by the conscience of every sinner. The duty of faith in the Lord Jesus—the great and only Saviour of mankind—is demanded on the fore front of the Christian message, and solemnly declared to be essential to salvation. The necessity of being born again is urged in the Scriptures with a frequency and power of which my preaching is but the faint and feeble echo—often as I press it on your attention. No duty is prior to these in time or in momentousness. Any and every thing else may be better dispensed with than these. You can better by far do without the love of earthly friends than without the love of God. You can better by far do without the wealth of this world than the treasures of heaven. You can better do without an earthly mansion, even if the earth were your bed and the skies your covering, than without a building of God, a house eternal in the heavens. You can better by far do without fame and praise in this world, than you can without the approbation of God in the world to come.

For these things you are neglecting him; you are neglecting your souls. Are the reasons which prompt you to it satisfactory? Are they sufficient to render you guiltless for neglecting such high and sacred obligations? Reflect a moment on the following considerations—the only remarks which I will detain you now to hear.

(1.) You dare not yourselves urge them as the real

cause why you do not attend to religion, and embrace the offers of mercy. They are so little satisfactory to your own minds, that when we come to you and urge you to become Christians, we are met with other reasons than these. You resort to some difficulty about the doctrine of ability, and the decrees of God ; some metaphysical subtlety that you know may embarrass *us*, but which you think of on no other occasion. Who will dare to urge as a reason for not becoming a Christian the fact that he is sensual, or proud, or worldly minded, or ambitious, or covetous, or self-righteous, or that he regards God as a tyrant? And yet one or all of these may be the basis of every reason why you are not Christians. Can that be a satisfactory reason for a man's conduct which he is ashamed himself to avow? Can that be the true reason which he avows for the purpose of embarrassing others, while another is buried deep in his bosom?

(2.) These excuses will not stand when a man is convicted for sin. He then ceases to urge that he is upright and moral ; that he has injured no one ; that there can be no danger for one who has lived as he has done ; that there are hypocrites in the church ; that he has been wronged by professors of religion ; and that he is afraid of the ridicule of mankind. He feels then that he must have a better righteousness than can be manufactured out of *such* materials, and that with these excuses he cannot venture to appear at the bar of God. There is a power in conviction for sin which is *in advance* of all the arguments which men can urge. It is the power of the Holy Ghost—under whose influences cavils, and objections, and self-reliances suddenly vanish. Under that power, men feel at once, despite all that they have said, and all the arguments on which they have relied, that they are sinners, and that they are exposed to the wrath of God. It is the argument that is *felt*, and which is irresistible on the soul. There is an access to the soul of the sinner which God has, but which no mortal man can have, and I appeal *now* to the fact that when men are brought under conviction for sin, they at once see that all their excuses for not being Christians are vain. Who are they who are thus convicted? Who, by the power of the Holy Ghost, have been made to see that



they are sinners, and have yielded their hearts up to God? Need I answer? They are such as have urged all the excuses to which I have adverted in this discourse, or such as have felt them all in their hearts. They are men who reason as well as who feel; they are those who were moral as well as those who were immoral; men not strangers to learning and science, as well as those who are ignorant of letters; and they who have moved not without grace and loveliness in elevated ranks as well as those of more humble walks in life. All, when the hour comes in which God designs to bring them into his kingdom, confess that they had no good reasons for not being his friends, and for their having so long refused to yield to the claims of God.

(3.) The same thing occurs on the bed of death. The mind then is often overwhelmed, and under the conviction that the excuses for not being a Christian were insufficient, the sinner in horror dies. But I will not dwell on that. I pass to one other consideration.

(4.) It is this. These excuses will not be admitted at the bar of God. Suppose they were, what would follow? Why, that *you* would enter heaven—for God will admit all to heaven, unless there is some good reason for not doing it. No man will be sent to hell unless there is a reason for it which will be satisfactory; a cause which *cannot* be removed by sympathy, or by infinite benevolence. If your excuses, then, for not being Christians are good, they will be admitted on the final trial, and you will be received into heaven. And what then? Why, *you* will be saved *because* you did not believe that you were as depraved as God had represented you to be; and *you*, because you did not believe what he had said of future punishment; and *you*, because you were sceptical on the whole subject of religion—saved by *unbelief*, not by *faith*; and *you*, because you believed that God was cruel and tyrannical in his character and government, and because there was so much merit in cherishing that opinion of him that he *ought* to save you; and *you*, because his professed friends had injured you, and you hated religion on that account; and *you*, because you were so worldly, and ambitious, and vain, and proud, that you neglected religion altogether: *you*,



because you were afraid of the ridicule of the world ; and *you*, because you cherished some ruling, forbidden lust which neither the command of God, nor the love of Christ, nor the fear of hell would induce you to surrender. And then what a place would be heaven ! What sympathy you would have with the redeemed ! What communion of spirit with the martyrs ! What fellowship with the Lord Jesus ! What gratitude would you have to him for salvation ! But, my hearers, do you believe that you are to be saved in that way ?—I, for one, do not. These are not the reasons why men are to enter into heaven.

I wish to get, by this discourse, at least *one* idea before your minds. It is this. If you have a good reason now for not being a Christian, it will be good at the bar of God. If not good then and there, it is worth nothing now. If it will not be the ground of your admission into heaven, it is of no value. Will you risk your soul's salvation, then, on the reasons which now operate to prevent your becoming a Christian ? A question than which none more important ever demanded your attention.

I close here. You see the conclusion to which we have come. If these reasons are not satisfactory ; if none on which you rely are satisfactory, then you *ought* to be a Christian.—*To be a Christian*. There is safety. There the mind finds rest. There, in the love of God, and in dependence on the Saviour, and in the hope of heaven, man feels that he does *RIGHT*. For that he needs no excuse ; he desires no apology. He is conscious of no wrong-doing when he gives up his heart to God ; he looks back with no self-reproaches for it when he contemplates it from the bed of death. The reasons which induce him to give himself to God are conclusive to his own mind ; satisfactory to his friends ; approved by his Judge. No man has, or ever has had remorse of conscience for being a Christian ; no man has self-reproaches for it on a bed of death. The mind then is at rest ; it is free from the anguish of remorse, from alarms. Who, then, to-day will seek that peace, and the smiles of an approving conscience, and of God ?

## SERMON VII.

### THE MISERY OF FORSAKING GOD.

Jeremiah ii. 13. My people have committed two evils ;—they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

THE text affirms that man is guilty of two evils. One is, that he has wandered away from God. The other is, that he has sought for happiness in objects which are incapable of affording it. There is the evil of guilt, and the evil of wretchedness ; the evil of withholding the affections from the true source of blessedness, and the evil of fixing them on improper objects ; the evil of going away from a fountain where happiness might be found, and the evil of attempting to find it in other objects as a compensation for that which is lost by forsaking God. Men have sought happiness by going away from God. They have been disappointed. They have not found it. That which they have found bears the same relation to true enjoyment which a cistern that is broken and leaky does to a running fountain. Such a cistern may have a great deal of beauty. It may be cut from the finest marble, and ornamented with all the skill of art. It may be placed in a beautiful grove, or it may occupy the splendid court of an oriental palace—but if it is cracked and broken, however much it may be admired, it fails in the design for which it was made, and for which a cistern is desirable.

Man has gone off from God, the great fountain of blessedness. He is a wanderer and an exile. He has substituted in the place of God that which is the fruit of his own invention, and thus far the history of this world is little else than an experiment to ascertain whether the soul can be satisfied without God, and whether the forms of amusement and business can be so modified and varied and refined that man can find in them the happiness which his immortal nature demands. It is a most inter-

esting inquiry whether he has been successful in the pursuit, or whether it has been like forsaking a fountain bubbling in the desert for a splendid but broken cistern. To that enquiry I propose now to direct your attention. I shall confine my remarks to two points.

I. What has man substituted in the place of God? and

II. Has it answered the purpose, or has it been successful?

I. What has man substituted in the place of the happiness which might have been found in God?

The text says that he has forsaken God—the fountain of living waters. Let us dwell a moment on these words.—“*Living waters.*” They are not dead and stagnant—but running—and imparting life. Nothing is more beautiful than a running stream. In the East the course of a stream through a desert can be traced afar by the trees, and shrubs, and flowers, and grass that spring up on its bank, and that are sustained by it in its course—a long waving line of *green* in the waste of sand. Where it winds along, that line of verdure winds along; where it expands into a lake that expands; where it dies away and is lost in the sand that disappears. So with the blessedness flowing from the living fountain of waters. Life, the true life in this world, can be traced by the flowing forth of those streams from God. Where those streams flow, health and happiness spring up; where they are unseen true happiness disappears, and the world is a desert.—“*A fountain.*” God is a “*fountain*” of living waters—he is the source whence all the streams of bliss take their rise. The fountain is ever fresh, ever pure, ever full. The streams of blessedness begin to flow there; and should that fountain cease, every stream would die away, and the whole world would be an arid waste.

My proposition is, that men have forsaken that ever-living fountain. I do not now speak merely of the idolatrous world—of man who there has forsaken God, and who bows down to shapeless blocks. I speak of man as man—in whatever form the departure may appear; and I rather wish to show how the human heart has gone off from God so that *we* may feel it of ourselves, than to turn your thoughts to far-distant idolaters and philosophers. I could illustrate it of the ancient Hebrews,

the Hindoo, the Chinese, the Tartar, the African, the New Zealander; I could illustrate it by the opinions and feelings of the ancient philosopher; but I have a more striking and more interesting source of illustration here—in our own families—and our own hearts—and the illustration will be confined mainly to ourselves.

It can be scarcely necessary to go into an extended statement of what man has substituted in the place of the happiness which he is unwilling to seek in his Maker, or which is the same thing in the hopes and consolations of religion. A very brief enumeration is all that the time will admit, and is all that is demanded in order to a proper understanding of our subject.

A part have sought it in philosophy. They have retreated from the bustle and the turmoil of life. They have sought enjoyment in calm contemplation on the relations of things, and on the abstract questions of philosophic inquiry. They have sought to raise themselves above suffering by rendering the mind insensible to the common ills of life, and they attempt to separate themselves from the common herd of mortals by their insensibility to the woes which affect the mass of mankind. They are the *stoics* of all ages—who whether in the costume and pride of the ancient Grecian philosophers; or in the Buddhism of China and India; or in the monkish system of the middle ages; or in the occasional victim of this wretched insanity who retires to caverns and rocks in modern times; or in the cool contemplative philosopher who lives but to speculate, or to laugh at the follies of mankind, have sought for happiness in the same way by supposing that it consisted in insensibility to suffering, and in that pride which looks with disdain on the mass of mankind.

A part, men of leisure and of taste, fly to the academic grove, and look for happiness there. They go up the sides of Parnassus, and drink from the Castalian fount, and court the society of the Muses. Their enjoyment, and their solace, is, in the pursuit of elegant literature. Their time is spent in belles-lettres—in the records of historic truth, or in the world of poetry and of fiction. Our land furnishes as yet less of this than countries where men are favored with more hereditary wealth, and more



“learned leisure;” but there are not a few who have such leisure, and not a few, it is to be feared, who substitute such sources of happiness in the place of that which is derived from the fountain of living waters. As wealth increases; and as leisure is multiplied, the desire for this species of happiness will increase—*increase not* as it ought to in connexion with religion, and with the cultivation of the graces of a renovated spirit, but as the *substitute* FOR religion, and as in fact the excluder of God from the soul. From the cares and troubles of life they will flee to these calm retreats as a refuge, and seek there to forget their sorrows, and to escape from the dreadful apprehension of death and the judgment.

Another, and a much larger portion, have substituted the pursuit of wealth in place of religion, and their happiness is there. This has become almost the universal passion of civilized man. Yet it is not happiness so much sought *in* the pursuit of wealth itself, as in something beyond. The cultivator of elegant literature seeks his enjoyment in the pursuit itself, and tastes the bliss which he seeks as he goes on the journey of life; the man seeking wealth expects *his* happiness not *in* the pursuit, but in that which wealth will procure. He looks on to the old age of elegant retirement and leisure which is before him; he sees in vision the comforts which he will be able to draw around him in the splendid mansion, and grounds, and in the abundance which his old age will enjoy. He crosses the ocean, and spends the vigor of his days in Calcutta or in Canton, not because he has pleasure in a voyage at sea; or in the long exile from home; or in the society in a distant land; or in the burning heats of a tropical sun, but because he has fixed his eye on the comforts which amassed wealth will spread around him when he shall return.

A large portion, perhaps nearly as large a portion as can afford the means—and many of those who cannot—seek for happiness in the brilliant world of songs and dances; in the splendid circles where God is forgotten, and where prayer is unknown. For that they live; and the pleasure which is sought there is made a substitute for that which might be, and which should be sought in God. No one can deny that vast talent is often exhibited

to make that gay world fascinating and alluring; and that no inconsiderable success is evinced in accomplishing the object in view. It would be strange if such a plan were wholly unsuccessful. With princely wealth at command; with ample leisure; with the full choice of means; and with a heart intently set on the object, it would be strange if *something* could not be originated that would, for the time being, be some substitute for the happiness which should be sought in God. But nothing on earth was ever designed in a more determinate manner to exclude God. Neither prayer, nor praise, nor worship of any form; neither the remembrance of God, nor the anticipation of a holy heaven; neither conversation on the Bible, the cross, or the peace of pardon and hope, come in for any share of the joys. It begins by forsaking the fountain of living waters, and it is conducted by whatever can be best made a substitute for the happiness to be found in religion.

I might go on to speak of many other substitutes which men have adopted in the place of the happiness which should be sought in God, and which constitute the ‘cisterns, broken cisterns which they have hewed out for themselves.’ I might speak of the career of high and so-called honorable ambition—whether manifested in seeking office, in deeds of glory or the battle-field, in the walks of science, or in the pride of authorship; of the drama, with all that is fascinating and captivating there; of the love of travel, and of hazardous enterprise in visiting distant lands; of the arts of painting, and music, and statuary; of the pleasures of the table; of the couch of luxury and ease, and of the indulgence in “the lusts that war against the soul”—of the low and debasing vices in which so many millions of the human race are at all times seeking enjoyment. Not all these things would I condemn for the same reason; some of them, if pursued with right motives, are not to be condemned at all. I speak of them only as substitutes for the happiness which men might find in God; as devices to which they have resorted to make their sojourn on earth in any way tolerable, and as adapted to hide as much as possible the melancholy close of that sojourn from view, and to keep the mind from sadness and despair.

All these things—differing as they do in regard to their worth or worthlessness; their dignity or meanness; their purity or their impurity; and differing in regard to the numbers and the ranks of those who pursue them, yet agree in two things: (1.) All are resorted to in pursuit of happiness; and (2.) all this happiness is pursued by the exclusion of God. They are a part of that great system which consists in forsaking the fountain of living waters, and in hewing out broken cisterns which can hold no water. They constitute the great scheme of an alienated and a talented world to find enjoyment without God.—They exhibit the result of the experiment which has been now pursued for about six thousand years, and with a talent and zeal worthy of any cause, to see whether the happiness lost by the apostasy in Eden can be recovered without returning to God; whether the cracked and broken cistern can be so repaired and beautified as not to make it necessary to come back to the fountain of living waters; and whether the calamities and woes which the apostasy from God introduced can be put back without the painful necessity of returning to the much-hated God from whom the race has revolted.

It is a very interesting question now, whether the plan has been successful; whether it is wise to pursue it any further; or whether the voice of wisdom would not prompt man to return to the fountain of living waters.

II. Our second inquiry, therefore, is, whether the plan is successful? Has it answered the purpose which was contemplated? Can the cistern which man has hewed out for himself be made to answer the purpose of the fountain of living waters?

These are questions, evidently, which are to be settled by experience; and in making the appeal to experience there are two enquiries to be answered. The first is, what is happiness? The second, can happiness be found in these things?

What is happiness? I shall not go largely into the examination of this question, for it is not necessary, and I can easily foresee that such an examination would be tiresome. There are two or three principles which it is important to state in order to a correct answer of the other question proposed. Happiness does *not* consist in mere



excitement, or laughter, or exhilaration, or ecstasy.—These may be found I admit without difficulty in this world—and may be found in abundance. The ball-room; the comedy; the low farce; the intoxicating bowl; the place of boisterous amusement will furnish them. But there are occasions when “laughter is mad;” and all this merriment and excitement may be attended or followed with an *under current* of sorrow that shall leave the soul to grief. In true happiness there must be always found certain elements, or certain essential principles, among which are the following: (1.) It must be adapted to the nature of man, or fitted to his true rank or dignity. It would be absurd to suppose that the philosopher could find permanent happiness in playing marbles, or an angel in blowing of bubbles. These are the amusements of children, and should God confine elevated minds to such an employment forever it would be to doom such minds to an eternal hell. So it must be with all trifles. They may amuse and divert for a little while, but they are not adapted to the elevated nature of the soul, and their power must fail. (2.) Again, there must be some permanency—some solid basis on which the superstructure is to be reared. Happiness cannot be found in a palace if that palace may at any moment fall down; in a cottage, if the wind may at any moment sweep it away; in an office, if at any moment it may be given to another; in beauty that must soon fade; in health and strength, that must soon become feeble; in a scene of pleasure, if it may soon be succeeded by grief. Who would be willing to stake his chance of happiness on the permanency of the brightest rainbow, or on the vivid lightning’s flash, or on the fixedness of the colors of the gorgeous clouds in a summer evening? Yet such a basis would be as secure as half the happiness that is sought in the gay world. (3.) Again, in true happiness in this world there must be a recognition of immortality. This must be, because man *is so made that he cannot wholly forget it*. There is a consciousness in us of an immortal nature. There is a longing after immortality that will be continually manifesting itself in spite of all that men can do. It will break out like sunshine between clouds, and men will feel they *have* souls that can never die; and he who is unwilling



to recognize that, can never be permanently happy. Nature will be true to herself and to the God that has made all things; and there are too many indications within us that we are immortal, and too many mementoes around us to remind us that we are travellers to a permanent home whatever it may be, to suffer us always to forget it. (4.) Once more. True happiness must be of such a nature that it will not be materially disturbed by the prospect of sickness, the grave, and eternity. These subjects are so frequently urged upon us; they pass along before us with such solemn and admonitory aspects; they are liable to come so near to us at any moment, that our sources of permanent happiness should be such that the mention of the grave would not dry them up; our joys should be such that the word "ETERNITY" would not put them all to flight. "My Athenian guest," said Cræsus to Solon, "the voice of fame speaks loudly of your wisdom. I have heard much of your travels; you have been led by a philosophic spirit to visit a considerable portion of the globe. I am here induced to enquire of you what man, of all you have beheld, has seemed to you most truly happy." After one or two unsatisfactory answers, and being pressed still for a reply, Solon said, "I shall not be able to give a satisfactory answer to the question you propose till I know that your scene of life shall have closed with tranquillity. The man of affluence is not in fact more happy than the possessor of a bare competency, unless in addition to his wealth his end be more fortunate. Call no man happy till you know the nature of his death. It is the part of wisdom to look to the event of things; for the Deity often overwhelms with misery those who have formerly been placed at the summit of felicity." Herod. 1. 24. 32. Our happiness must not be of such a nature as to be disturbed by the recognition of death, and the anticipation of a future world. That which is dissipated by the mention of the grave—whatever else you may call it—ecstasy, hilarity, laughter, merriment, is not happiness; that which is put to flight by the word *eternity* cannot be the kind of enjoyment fitted to the nature of man.

You say, perhaps, I have given my own definition of the word happiness, and that it will now be easy for me

to show that the happiness which man seeks cannot be found away from God. I admit that this is true; and that your notions of happiness may differ materially from mine. And yet it seems to me you cannot but admit that happiness *must* embody or admit these elements. It must be adapted to our nature. It must have some evidence of permanency. It must recognize our immortality. It must be of such a kind that it will not be disturbed by the mention of death and eternity. With these principles before us, let us now inquire whether man has found that which he has sought by going away from the fountain of living waters; or whether he has not hewed out to himself broken cisterns.

My appeal is mainly to experience—and here the argument need not be long. The experience of the world on this point may be divided into two great parts—the *recorded* and the *unrecorded*. Which contains the larger portion is not material to our inquiry, and either would be decisive of the controversy. Of the *recorded* testimony of the world, I appeal to the records made on sick beds, and in graves; to the disappointments, and cares, and anxieties, evinced all over the world as the result of the revolt in Eden, and of wandering away from God.

Recall for one moment what the forsaking of God has done. Whence is sorrow, disappointment, pain, death? The misery of our world all began at that sad hour when man ate the fruit of the forbidden tree.—What might not this world have been if man had never forsaken the fountain of living waters! The bliss of Eden might have been prolonged to the present time, and not a tear have been shed, not a sigh heard, not a couch spread for the sick and the dying; and the earth would never have opened its bosom to furnish a grave! Every sorrow, every tear, every sad hour among men has been caused by the fact that man has forsaken his God; and the woes of the earth are an impressive commentary on the fact which I am endeavoring to illustrate—the evil of forsaking God.

If I had time I would like to follow out the effect of it in a single case. I would show the effect of it from the first moment of apostasy, to the last act when the sinner attempts to exclude God from the soul on the bed of

death. I would take such a case as that of Cain—the first instance, perhaps, of one who forsook the fountain of living waters no more to return, and the oldest earthly inhabitant now, perhaps, of the world of despair. Nor do I know but I might be allowed in doing this to make use of a celebrated poem, full of blasphemy, of the name “Cain ;” expressive, I doubt not, of the real feelings of this early apostate, and *so* true and graphic because it was drawn from the deep fountain of unbelief and blasphemy in the heart of its titled, but miserable author. The subject of the poem, and the author of the poem, might alike furnish us an illustration of the essential misery of the man who has forsaken the fountain of living waters;—the one a fugitive, a murderer, a vagabond, in a beautiful world fresh from the hand of God;—the other a nobleman, an inheritor of a palace—and yet a miserable misanthrope—and, like Cain, an unhappy wanderer from land to land.

But why look to Cain, or to the not inappropriate historian of his blasphemies? Look at our world at large—a dying world—full of sadness and wo. Look at the bold blasphemer—who is yet, if ever, for the first moment to know peace. Look at the infidel, the sceptic—without a God, without a Saviour, whose hope is chance, whose peace is the troubled sea. Look at the convicted sinner—over whose head the thunder of justice rolls, and at whose feet the lightnings of vengeance play because he has forsaken his God. Look into your own heart, to this moment devoid of true peace unless you are a renewed and pardoned man. Look at the death-bed of a sinner; read in some moment of leisure the account of the dying moments of Voltaire, D’Alembert, or Robespierre—and you will neither need nor ask any further illustration of the misery of forsaking God.

Again, for an important record of the capability of this world to furnish the happiness which man desires, I refer to the book of Ecclesiastes. Never had man more ample opportunities of finding happiness in all that this world can bestow than Solomon had. With abundant wealth; with all the means of luxury which his age and land, and a somewhat extended foreign commerce could furnish; with peace at home and abroad; he early forgot



the counsel of a pious father, and forsook his father's God. At the close of a life over which he had much occasion to mourn, he is believed to have written the book of Ecclesiastes, as an expression of *his* sense of the power of this world to furnish happiness. "I said in mine heart I will prove thee with mirth; therefore, enjoy pleasure. I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, and to lay hold on folly till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," was the result of perhaps the largest and the best conducted experiment of the kind ever undertaken by man. At the close of a dissatisfied life we may trust this illustrious wanderer from God returned to the fountain of living waters, and this instructive record he has left to admonish all those who would tread in his footsteps, that however far they may go, and however they may vary the experiment, they will come to the same result.

"I now read Solomon," said Lord Chesterfield when sixty-six years of age, and near the close of his unenviable life, "with a sort of sympathetic feeling. I have been as wicked and vain, though not as wise as he; but am now at last wise enough to feel and attest the truth of his reflections, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. This truth is never sufficiently discovered or felt by mere speculation; experience is necessary for conviction, though perhaps at the expense of some morality."

There is still one other part of the recorded experience of mankind in regard to the insufficiency of the substitute that has been adopted to give happiness. I allude to the



experience of the penitent and the Christian world. Every man who comes back to God, like the Prodigal Son returning to his father's house, comes with this as an important part of his testimony, that in the efforts which *he* has made to find happiness he has been disappointed, and he now comes back to the fountain of living waters. Nor is the number few, nor is their testimony without value. Many hundreds of millions on earth and in heaven now constitute the entire church which has been redeemed, and all come with the same language as to the power of the world to furnish enjoyment. They have turned away from the broken cisterns and have come back to the fountain of living waters. And who are they? The poor; the ignorant; the needy; the down-trodden you say;—they who have had no means of enjoying the world, or of making a full experiment there. I admit it to a great extent—perhaps to all the extent you wish—and would then say in regard to *them* that it is no mean honor for Christianity to have given to the poor, and the wretched, and the comfortless, peace and joy. But who have come with them to the cross? I see among them men with crowned heads laying the diadem at the feet of the Redeemer, and exchanging their princely robes for the garments of salvation. I see men coming from the halls of splendor and seeking for happiness in the religion of the Saviour. I see them come from the circles of the great, and the gay, and the rich, from the splendid party, the ball-room, and the theatre, and confessing that the happiness which they sought was not to be obtained there, and seeking it now in God. Satisfied now that the world cannot meet the desires of the immortal mind, they come back to their Maker, and find permanent bliss in the Christian hope of immortality. A living poet has beautifully expressed the feelings of them all, as they approach the church, the altar, the cross.

People of the living God,  
I have sought the world around,  
Paths of sin and sorrow trod,  
Peace and comfort nowhere found :  
Now to you my spirit turns,  
Turns, a fugitive unblest ;  
Brethren, where your altar burns,  
O receive me unto rest !

Lonely I no longer roam,  
Like the cloud, the wind, the wave;  
Where you dwell shall be my home,  
Where you die shall be my grave;  
Mine the God whom you adore—  
Your Redeemer shall be mine;  
Earth can fill my heart no more,  
Every idol I resign.

Montgomery.

And what has been the result? Have the returning wanderers been satisfied? Have they found that which they sought, in the fountain of living waters? Hear one of them speak who gives utterance to the sentiments of them all. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks so panteth my soul after thee, O God, my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." God, to such a man, becomes the portion of the soul. In his existence, perfections, government, plans, works; in his promises, and in his communications to the soul that loves him, and in the hope of dwelling with him, the weary heart finds peace, and the burdened spirit rest. From the fountain of living waters the returning wanderer drinks and thirsts no more. It is pure, elevating, inexhaustible. Like a perennial fountain it fails not by years, it is not exhausted by the numbers that partake of it. It does not tire in the enjoyment; it does not leave the soul in sickness; it does not forsake it in death. *That* happiness goes with us to all lands and to all worlds, and becomes brighter and purer as earthly joys fade away and as the hour approaches when we must leave the world. None have come to God and been disappointed; none who have truly tasted his love have had again a supreme relish for the joys of sense and of sin.

I said that a part of the experience of this world in reference to the happiness which is sought away from God, is *unrecorded*. I refer to that as yet unwritten volume where would be recorded all the sad disappointments, the cares, the anxieties, and the sorrows of those who are seeking happiness in the world. I mean the corroding

envy, and jealousy, and chagrin, and inward vexation which may enter the most splendid circle, and which may live there despite all that is gay and winning. In that brilliant world all may seem to be smiles and blandishments; on the pillow where the aching head shall rest, the eyes may give vent to tears at disappointment, or the heart be swollen by envy and chagrin, for which tears would afford no relief. Madame Malibran, the most celebrated opera singer of her age, returning home from a grand aristocratic party, where all had striven to overwhelm her with admiration, burst into tears, knowing that after all she was "a mere *opera-singer*." Alexander wept on the throne of the world. Charles V. and Dioclesian descended from the throne to seek that happiness in the vale of private life, which could never be found in the robes of royalty. Goethe, the celebrated German author, said of himself in advanced age, "They have called me a child of fortune, nor have I any wish to complain of the course of my life. Yet it has been nothing but labor and sorrow, and I may truly say that in seventy-five years, I have not had four weeks of true comfort. It was the constant rolling of a stone that was always to be lifted anew." Who shall record the disappointment of those who seek wealth as their portion? Who shall gather up and write down the names of the young men—numerous as mighty armies—who have sought fame, and been disappointed? Who shall give utterance to the unrecorded sighs that bespoke the failures in the pursuit of happiness in the gay assembly?—The most instructive part of the history of our world is unwritten—at least is not written among mortals. It is recorded in the book that preserves the memory of human deeds with reference to the judgment, and will be developed only on the final trial. It is the record of numberless individual failures and disappointments; the total history of that which makes up the vast experiment in our world to find enjoyment without the friendship of the Most High; the record of what has resulted to men for having forsaken the fountain of living waters, and for having hewed out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Wandering sinner, permit me to say to you in conclu-

sion, you can never be happy without God. You are destined to be a miserable man while you wander away from him—as the Prodigal Son was wretched who had left his father's home. Nor wealth, nor books, nor business, nor games, nor the dance, nor eating, nor drinking, nor a splendid dwelling, nor a brilliant reputation, nor all that you can do to secure a grateful remembrance after you are dead, can be a substitute for the happiness that is to be found in God. *You* may be false to your Maker, but the world will be true to the God that made it. It will not impart happiness except when *he* bids it. True is that world to its God—the earth, the air, the sea, the silver, and the gold. Not one of them will give peace except when *he* commands, and all of them he can make a curse to your soul. There *is* no substitute for the bliss which he alone can give; and though you may pervert your own powers, yet you can never so torture and pervert the works of the Almighty as to make them confer permanent enjoyment except when he commands.

Wandering sinner, learn from our subject the benevolent design of the plan of redemption. It is to bring back an alienated and wretched race to the fountain of living waters. It comes to us on the presumption that man *must* be miserable as long as he continues to wander away from his Maker. From the broken cistern which can hold no water, it would re-conduct the race back to God, and restore the bliss of Eden. O happy if man had never wandered away, and happy still if he would return. Not one favor would be denied by him who has had so just cause to be offended; not one frown would the sinner find on the brow of the Almighty; not one expression of kindness would be withheld if he would return. The same heaven might be his abode as if he had never sinned, and the bliss of even God's eternal favor may be heightened to the returning sinner by all there is in thankfulness for redemption, and in returning joy after many sorrows.

Wandering sinner, I call on you to return to your long forgotten God—the fountain of living waters. In view of the experience of the world; in view of its recorded woes in every face of care, in every sick bed, in every grave, as the result of wandering away from God; and in



view of the unrecorded ills of forsaking him, I call on you to come back. Sufficient has been the sad experience of the world to satisfy you that *in* those wanderings happiness never can be found. Let the experience of the world—dear bought in millions of instances—lead you to return. Come back, unhappy wanderer, come back: come to the ever-living fountain of bliss; come and partake of the happiness that never deceives, and that never fails. From the parched and desolate land where you have gone, come back to the fountain of living waters. Yes, come to the fountain of living waters; for the Spirit and the bride say come, and whosoever will let him take the water of life **FREELY**.

## SERMON VIII.

### GOD IS WORTHY OF CONFIDENCE.

Job xxii. 21. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace.

THAT is, with God. The case to which the text refers was this. Eliphaz—who addresses these words to Job—supposed that he was wholly a stranger to the true God; that he had altogether erroneous views of his government; that he regarded him as harsh and severe in his administration, and as unworthy of *confidence*. In his sufferings, Job had at some times indulged in remarks of considerable severity on the divine dealings. This was by no means the prevailing character of the man; but it was so interpreted by his friends, and Eliphaz now designs to assure him that he could never find peace until he should become more acquainted with the divine character, and should feel that God was worthy of confidence. He proceeds, therefore, in a most beautiful manner to exhort him to be reconciled to God, and portrays the benefits which would result from such reconciliation. The meaning is, ‘Become truly acquainted with the character and government of God. You have now no just views of him. You regard him as harsh, severe, tyrannical. You murmur, and complain, and are wretched. Estranged from him, you must be miserable. But it is not too late to repent and return to him; and in so doing you will find peace.’ Eliphaz—however improperly he applied this to Job—has here stated a doctrine which has been confirmed by all the subsequent revelations in the Bible, and by all experience, that happiness follows reconciliation with God, and that true peace is found only there. This doctrine must have been understood as early as religion was known after the fall. Man became alienated from God by the apostasy, and consequently miserable; and peace was to be found again only by reconciliation with him.

There are two great difficulties in the minds of men. The one is, they have no just views of the character and

government of God; and the second is, if his true character *is* made known to them, they have no pleasure in it—no confidence in it. Both these difficulties must be removed before man can be reconciled to his Maker. No small part of the difficulty will be removed if we can show him that the character of God is such as to **DESERVE** his confidence. To that task I now proceed, and shall arrange my thoughts under three heads:—

I. The liability to error on our part in judging of the character and government of God;

II. The real difficulties in the case; and

III. The evidence that he is worthy of our confidence.

I would not attempt an argument of this nature, were it not that I believe that the great difficulty with men is, that they have no confidence in God. This is the source of all our woes. Man does not believe that the God of the Bible is worthy to be the Sovereign of the universe; that his **government** is equal; and that the terms of his favors are the best that could be. He confides in his own understanding rather than in God; forms his own plan of religion rather than embrace the one which God has revealed; and relies on his own merits for salvation rather than on the merits of him whom God has sent. He goes not to him in perplexity; asks not his support in sickness; relies not on him in the hour of death. The great evil in this world is *a want of confidence in God*;—a want of confidence producing the same disasters there which it does in a commercial community, and in the relations of domestic life. The great thing needful to make this a happy world is to restore *confidence* in the Creator—confidence, the great restorer of happiness every where.

Now, men can never be reconciled to God unless this confidence shall be restored. You and your neighbor are at variance. The dispute has been bitter and long. There has been a misunderstanding, and dissatisfaction, and a lawsuit, and a long strife resulting in a confirmed alienation. Now, suppose, in this difficulty, you are wholly right, and your neighbor wholly wrong. You have really done him no injury. You have not been unwilling to be on terms of friendship with him. But a long train of circumstances, which you could not have

well controlled, has operated to make him misunderstand your character, or suspect your motives. Evil minded men have for their own ends misrepresented you. They have reported to him things which you have not said, and they have magnified trifles until they seem to be mountains. Affairs have come to such a state, that he has no confidence in you, and believes your character to be wholly unworthy of respect. Now what is to be done in the case to bring about reconciliation? Not that you are to *change* your character. Not that you are to make acknowledgments where no wrong has been done. *It is to restore to his mind just confidence in yourself*—to explain matters; to show him what you are; to undo the evils which busy-bodies have done in giving him a wrong impression of you;—and if, *back* of all this, he has had hard thoughts of you without the show of reason, and simply because he does not like a character of honesty and truth, he is to lay all that aside. Then peace would be restored. This is what is to be done in religion. It is to convince men that God is worthy of confidence;—and that all that has been said by infidels, and sceptics, and scoffers against him, is unjust and wrong; and *then*, if *back* of all these false representations of the character of God, you have been cherishing any feelings hostile to his *real* character, to entreat you to lay them aside. This would be reconciliation.—And why should a man wish to cherish any hard thoughts of God without the shadow of reason—**HATING HIM FROM THE PURE LOVE OF HATING HIM?**

In the case of the two individuals referred to, it will easily be seen that the one who supposed he was injured, would be liable to form very erroneous estimates of the character of the other. A man is not in very favorable circumstances for estimating character when he is engaged in a quarrel, nor is he then very likely to do justice to the motives and the actions of his neighbor. A thousand things are concerned in forming our judgments, against which we should, in such circumstances, guard ourselves. Now, how is it in our estimate of the character of God? Are we in no danger of being influenced by improper feelings? This is the point before us. It does not require long consideration, and I shall therefore



just refer to four sources of danger on this point which I think any careful observer will find in his own mind.

(1.) The first is, that we are in danger of being governed in our views of God by mere *feeling*, rather than by sober judgment and calm investigation. We must all have been sensible of this in our differences with others, and cannot have forgotten how our feelings magnified trifles, refused explanations, imputed wrong motives, and gave a coloring to the whole transaction. We can remember how little weight at that time the declaration of the man himself from whom we were estranged, had on our mind, and how little credit we gave to what we deemed the partial and one-sided representations of his friends. There is danger that the same thing will happen in regard to God. The views of most men on the subject of religion are drawn from their *feelings*. How few are they who sit down to a calm investigation to ascertain what *in fact* is the character and government of God! How few of those who speculatively profess to believe the Bible, sit down patiently to ascertain what it teaches on that point! How many there are who are drawn along by their own reflections and feelings into the views which they now entertain of God, or who have been led to form their present views by a remark of some man who is an infidel or a scoffer!

(2.) A second source of liability to error is, that we are often in circumstances where we are in danger of cherishing hard thoughts of God. He takes away our property, or our health, or our friends; he frustrates our plans, hedges up our way, throws embarrassments in our course, and does this, so far as we can see, without reason or necessity. Now, no man is in the best situation to judge candidly, or to form a favorable opinion of the divine character, in such circumstances. The tendency is to make us feel that his government is severe and arbitrary. Suppose a case between two neighbors where a difference existed. Would you be in a situation to judge favorably of the character of your neighbor, should he be doing constantly what you thought to be injury to you without reason? I know this case is not quite parallel, but it may illustrate what I mean. This was the case with Job. He had suffered much; and many of his

remarks—full of complaint and murmuring—show the effect of this condition on *his* mind in unfitting him to come to such conclusions as should lead him to confide in God.

(3.) A third source of liability to error in judging of the character of God is, that we always regard ourselves as the aggrieved and injured party. We do not allow ourselves to suppose it *possible* that God should be right and we wrong; but whatever injury is done, we allow ourselves to suppose has been done by *him*. If God treats us *as if* we were great sinners, we do not allow ourselves for a moment to suppose that we are such, but instantly revert to our ideas of our own morality and integrity; if he threatens to punish us forever in hell, we do not allow ourselves for a moment to suppose that we deserve such a treatment, but regard it at once as proof that he is arbitrary and stern; and while this is the case, how is it possible for a man to put confidence in God, or to feel that he ought to be reconciled to him? His opposition he regards as in no small degree meritorious; and he feels that he would be wanting in self-respect to cherish any other views of his Maker than he actually does.

(4.) A fourth source of liability to error, or to a want of confidence in God, *lies back* of all this. It is not merely that we do not *understand* his true character, but it is that we are not pleased with that character when it *is* understood. We have by nature no pleasure in God. He is too holy, too just, too pure, too true, to satisfy creatures such as we are; and there is no fact better established in the history of man, account for it as you may, and draw what inferences from it you choose, than that man by nature has a strong opposition to the character of God, even when that character is understood. He does not like to retain him in his knowledge. He loves sin too much, and hates restraint, and desires his own gratification, and has no sympathy with the divine perfections and attributes. Now, with this state of mind, he looks on God and all that he does, through a distorted medium, and is constantly seeking some ground of accusation; something that shall to him answer the purpose of self-defence.

These are some of the liabilities to error in judging of

the divine character, and it is to be feared that the views which not a few have of God, have been formed under some such feelings as these. It is evident, however, at a glance, that all the views of the divine character which are formed under influences like these are likely to be wrong, and should constitute no real difficulty in the question whether we shall put confidence in him. I proceed, therefore,

II. To the second general point of enquiry—the real difficulties in the case. I mean where a man has no prejudice; no embittered feeling; no cherished opposition: where he is not suffering under any ill in such a way as to sour his mind or pervert his understanding, and where he would *wish* to see such evidence that he may put unwavering confidence in God.

I think it is to be admitted that such a man may have great difficulties. There are many things which he cannot understand. There are many things which he cannot reconcile with such a view. Briefly, for this is a point on which we ought not long to dwell, such a man will advert to such facts as the following, viz:

That sin should have been allowed to come into the system formed by a holy God. That since he had power to create or not, as he chose, and since worlds have been made that were holy, and are still holy, that *all* should not have been made so. That misery has come into the universe, and that death, with many forms of wo, has been commissioned to cut down one whole race, and that, in doing it, the whole earth is strewn with hospitals, and sick-beds, and graves. That the immortal mind should be allowed to jeopard its infinite welfare, and that trifles should be allowed to draw it away from God, and virtue, and heaven. That any should suffer forever—lingering on in hopeless despair, and rolling amidst infinite torments without the possibility of alleviation, and without end. That since God *can* save men, and *will* save a part, he has not purposed to save *all*; that on the supposition that the atonement is ample, and that the blood of Christ can cleanse from all and every sin, it is not in fact applied to all. That, in a word, a God who claims to be worthy of the confidence of the universe, and to be a being of infinite benevo-



lence, should make such a world as this—full of sinners and sufferers; and that when an atonement had been made, he did not save *all* the race, and put an end to sin and wo forever.

These, and kindred difficulties, meet the mind when we think on this great subject; and they meet us when we endeavor to urge our fellow-sinners to be reconciled to God, and to put confidence in him. On this ground they hesitate. These are *real*, not imaginary difficulties. They are probably felt by every mind that ever reflected on the subject—and they are unexplained, unmitigated, unremoved. I confess, for one, that I feel them, and feel them more sensibly and powerfully the more I look at them, and the longer I live. I do not understand these facts; and I make no advances towards understanding them. I do not know that I have a ray of light on this subject which I had not when the subject first flashed across my soul. I have read, to some extent, what wise and good men have written. I have looked at their various theories and explanations. I have endeavored to weigh their arguments—for my whole soul pants for light and relief on these questions. But I get neither; and in the distress and anguish of my own spirit, I confess that I see no light whatever. I see not one ray to disclose to me the reason why sin came into the world; why the earth is strewed with the dying and the dead, and why man must suffer to all eternity. I have never seen a particle of light thrown on these subjects that has given a moment's ease to my tortured mind; nor have I an explanation to offer, or a thought to suggest, which would be a relief to you. I trust other men—as they profess to do—understand this better than I do, and that they have not the anguish of spirit which I have; but I confess, when I look on a world of sinners and of sufferers; upon death-beds and grave-yards; upon the world of wo filled with hosts to suffer forever;—when I see my friends, my parents, my family, my people, my fellow-citizens—when I look upon a whole race, all involved in this sin and danger, and when I see the great mass of them wholly unconcerned, and when I feel that God only can save them and yet that he does not



do it, I am struck dumb. It is all dark—dark—dark to my soul—and I cannot disguise it.

Yet even here, in the midst of this gloom, I cast about my eyes to see if I can find no evidence that God is worthy of my confidence; no evidence that though “clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.” Is there nothing on which my soul may rest, and of which I may speak to my fellow-men, when *their* minds are involved in the same perplexity? And when I come to them as the ambassador of God, and ask them to be reconciled, is there nothing which I can say to convince them that God is worthy of that confidence, and to satisfy them that in all this gloom they may repose on their Creator? I have found for myself a rock in this heaving ocean; a star on which the eye may be fixed in the dark night. I proceed,

III. In the third place to state, in the briefest manner possible, the process of my own reflections on this point, or the reasons why confidence should be placed in him, and why men should be exhorted to become acquainted with him, and be at peace.

My faith rests mainly on God’s own word; on the testimony of himself in regard to his real character and plans; on the assurances which I find there, that, notwithstanding all the difficulties in the case, he is holy, true, just, good, and worthy of universal love and confidence. It is the assurance of him who knows his own character, and who declares most solemnly that all that he does is consistent with the rules of eternal equity and right. He has given what I believe to be a revelation of his character, and has made such declarations respecting it as to claim the confidence of mankind. Here *my* mind rests. Conscious of my liability to err; knowing how short-sighted I am; feeling that man *must* be incompetent to sit in judgment on the government and plans of God; and knowing that there *may be* developments yet that shall make all that is now dark, clear; all that is obscure, light, I put my trust in his assurances, and the mind finds repose.

But I find also in his government, as it is actually administered, not a little to confirm this confidence, and to

calm the distresses of the soul ; not a little that I think may be so stated as to show to men that he is worthy of their confidence. I shall state some of these things now, in the conclusion of this discourse. It can be merely, however, to glance at thoughts which should be expanded to much greater length. They are such as these :—

(1.) The government of God is one of law—always presumptive proof that a government is worthy of confidence. It is not a government of mere will, or caprice ; not a government of passion, and therefore not one of arbitrary tyranny. Where there is law which is known, and which is rigidly adhered to, there may be confidence. It shows that the sovereign has confidence himself in his own principles ; that he is willing that they should be known ; that he does not mean to be governed by caprice. He publishes his principles of administration, and submits them to the world ; and in such a fact there is proof that there is stability. A mob is governed by no law ; a tyrant is controlled by no principle but his will ; or if laws are proclaimed, they are proclaimed only to be set aside by caprice. But it is not so with God. His is a government of law, and has been from the beginning. We know what he requires ; we know what he will do in given circumstances. Those laws are not set aside by will ; they are not disregarded by caprice or passion. In such a government there is *presumptive* ground, at least, for confidence.

(2.) That government is stable and firm. What it is in one place it is in another. What he requires of one he requires of all ; what he forbids in one place he does every where. What he prohibits in heaven, he does on earth and in hell ; what he approves in heaven, he approves in all worlds. What in one generation he approves or forbids, he approves or forbids in all ; what in one complexion or climate, he does every where. Virtue that he rewards in one age, he rewards in all ; and vice that he punishes in one clime, he punishes every where. The deed that excites his displeasure beneath rags, excites his displeasure beneath the purple ; and the victim that he smiles upon on the throne, pleases him not less in the cottage. The light which comes to our eye from the sun, is governed by the same laws as the light which is

borne from the remotest star ; and the same laws apply to water on the rose-bud and in the dew-drop which control it in the deep ocean. We know, therefore, what to expect. We see a government that is settled and firm ; and such a government has at least *some* of the elements to produce confidence.

(3.) All the operations of his government, and all his laws, tend to promote the welfare of his subjects. None are originally designed to produce misery ; none do produce misery except when violated. There are, for example, certain laws pertaining to health. They require temperance, purity, industry, absence from exciting and violent passions. All these laws tend to the welfare of the individual, and if obeyed, injure no one. There are certain laws pertaining to the acquisition of property. These laws, if obeyed, injure no one, but would promote the welfare of all. These are laws requiring truth, honesty, temperance, chastity, love, kindness, charity. None are injured by their observance. None ever have been. None ever will be. It is a matter of the clearest demonstration, that if all those laws had been observed in the exact sense of their requirements from the creation of the universe, no one would have been injured by them ; and you cannot find one of the laws of his kingdom whose observance would not have been attended with benefit, or where its violation has not been an injury sooner or later. This is so clear that it needs no argument ; and is not such a government worthy of confidence ? Has it not a claim on the love and obedience of those who are its subjects ? To see the full force of this, you have only to remember that it was in the power of God to have made laws directly the reverse, and to have so ordained them that the observance of each one would have been followed with a sigh or a groan. When I suffer, therefore, and when, under the influence of suffering, I am disposed to complain of God, let me remember that that suffering is somehow connected with the violation of law, and that the Creator has ordained no law, in the exact observance of which such misery would have followed. In such a God, and in such a government, can we see no reasons for confidence ?

(4.) I look a step farther. I see a great number of



arrangements designed to meet the evils which have in fact grown up in the system—evils in all cases the result of some violated law. I know the great difficulty lies just here, and you will ask me why those evils were allowed to come into the system? Why were they not prevented? This is the gordian knot which we can neither cut nor untie. I answer frankly that I do not know. I have not one ray of light to shed here. I am involved in deep midnight, as I believe all mankind are; and I see not that one explanation has ever been offered that has helped the matter in the least. But when the evil has entered the system, what is the conduct of the sovereign then? Has he suffered it to go on unheeded, unrebuked, and with no effort to arrest it? Are there no devices, no contrivances to stay the evil, and ultimately to remove it? If the original law were good, he would be under no obligation to interpose to arrest the evil resulting from its violation; but if he did interpose, it would be so much proof standing out by itself that he was worthy the confidence of the sufferers. This, then, introduces us into a new department of the divine administration, and a department that extends as far as we are concerned with evil and wo. It is the department of remedies for the evils of the violated system;—a remedial arrangement designed to anticipate the coming evil, and to prevent its being finally and wholly destructive. Such are the remedies in the case of disease designed to meet and mitigate it, or to remove it; and such is the great remedy for *all* the maladies of men in the atonement. It is almost susceptible now of demonstration, and the proof is increasing every year—that there is not a form of disease to which the human system is liable for which some salutary remedy has not been provided; it is capable of complete demonstration that there is not an evil of any kind which sin has introduced, pertaining to the shattered body and the darkened soul, for which a complete remedy has not been provided in the plan of redemption. Wo, in this life, may all be mitigated by that plan, and completely removed hereafter; the soul, contaminated by sin, may become yet wholly pure; death, the great evil, may be wholly destroyed, and the time come when the grave shall



not have a tenant, and when the whole earth shall not have a tomb. But if this be so, then there is ground of confidence in the government of God. To such a being I would not be a stranger.

(5.) We come to a fifth feature of his administration. It is, that in that plan of complete recovery, none are excluded from his favor who desire his favor. I trust you will understand me, and not give me credit for any more proof under this point than I deserve. I do not say that none are finally excluded from the favor of God. I am not able to come to such a conclusion. But this is my position, that none are excluded from his favor who **DE-SIRE** his favor; that none of those who are lost had any **WISH** to be his friends. This is the question of most thrilling interest to us. It is not whether any have been lost, or will be. It is not whether Achan, Judas, Simon Magus, Cesar Borgia, Richard III., and Voltaire went to heaven. It is whether it can or cannot be demonstrated that any have been sent to hell who sincerely **DESIRED TO GO TO HEAVEN**; whether any have been refused forgiveness of sin who sincerely **WISHED IT**; whether any have been thrust away from the cross who **SINCERELY ASKED** to be saved by the blood of the Redeemer; whether any have truly plead for mercy, and have been denied; whether, in the world of wo, it can ever be said—

“ Here’s a soul that perished, suing  
For the boasted Saviour’s aid.”

If there have been any such instances, it is right to ask where the *evidence* is to be found. Is it in the Bible? To me it speaks a wholly different language. Have those who have gone down to death ever *said* this? Have Nero and Caligula, Herod and Cesar Borgia, Paine and D’Alembert any where left it on record that they had sincerely applied for pardon and salvation through the atonement and were rejected, and that they became monsters in iniquity because God would not save them? Such a record remains yet to be adduced. Go to the multitudes of profligates and atheists; the dissolute and the profane; the unprincipled and the vile, and ask *them* the question, ‘Are you thus because you went in humble prayer before God, and sued for pardon and sal-

vation in the name of the Redeemer, and were rejected?' And what would be the answer? A volley of curses, perhaps, that the question was asked at all; certainly such a spirited response as would effectually clear them from the suspicion that they had ever done such a weak thing as to pray. The truth is simply this. No means will induce them to come and ask for pardon. We plead with men; we urge argument and entreaty; we appeal to their consciences, their hopes, their fears; we point them to heaven, and we warn them of hell, but all in vain. The great mass press on in the broad road to death, and scarce one takes the pains even to turn his head and to say—what he feels—that he scorns the idea of seeking salvation through a Redeemer. Meantime here and there one leaves "the herd," comes back, and asks for mercy; and I appeal to the whole history of the world—from the publican and the dying thief to the present time—in proof that no one who came in that manner was ever rejected. And to the same universal history I appeal with the same confidence in proof that no one of the lost ever sincerely *desired* to be saved. But if so, here is at least one ground of confidence in God. What could we ask more?

(6.) I have one other remark only to make now—for the time will not admit of more. It is, that they who know most of the character and government of God, and who are best qualified to judge, repose most entire confidence in him. Angels in heaven doubt not his goodness, and mercy, and truth, and in their bosoms there dwells no distrust. Multitudes on earth who were once alienated and even miserable because they were alienated; who murmured against God, and who, in murmuring, found no relief; and who rebelled in the day of adversity, and thus plunged themselves into deeper sorrows, have returned, and now see that he is worthy of their highest trust. Since their return; since they have become 'acquainted' with him, they have been at peace. They have not doubted that he was qualified to rule; and they have committed to him the interest dearest to mortals—the interest of the immortal soul—and felt that all was safe. Prophets and apostles did this; confessors and martyrs did it; and there are tens of thousands now on earth, and millions in heaven who have done it. God they have

found true to his promises. The afflicted have found him a support ; the dying have leaned on his arm ; and the living now find him all that the heart desires to find in their God. I make use of this as an argument. It is the argument of history ; of experience. You will not doubt that it is a legitimate argument, for they have had all the feelings of distrust, and complaining, and murmuring, which any can have now, and they have passed through all the circumstances which we can conceive of to test our confidence in God. It has been enough. They have been upheld, and have found it true that he would ‘ never leave nor forsake them.’

My hearers, I have desired so to set this subject before you as to describe your state of mind, and to show you the propriety of being reconciled to God. I know not that I have succeeded in removing one difficulty from the mind ; but I would trust that the remarks which I have made will not increase the perplexity. To you candidly I commit the remarks made ; with God I leave them for his blessing. The conclusions which I think we have reached, are these—

(1.) It is a *duty* to be reconciled to God :—a duty to him, for his government is just and right, and opposition to him is *wrong*.

(2.) It is unwise to maintain the state of mind in which many indulge—chafed and fretted against God, and yet using no means to ascertain his true character, and to be at peace.

(3.) The world is doing its Creator great injustice. It charges him with cruelty and wrong ; holds him to be unworthy of confidence and love ; is filled with hard thoughts and fretted feelings ; and is venting complaints and murmurings. Thousands murmur in their hearts ; thousands complain openly ; thousands curse him on his throne. What a world !

(4.) It is foolish as well as wicked to resist him. What can resistance avail against almighty power ! Justice and wisdom, truth and love constrain us, therefore, to say to each one of you, ‘ Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace !’

## SERMON IX.

### REPENTANCE.

Acts xvii. 30. And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

THIS command is as positive as any other in the Bible. It is simple and easily understood. From its obligations there are no exceptions made in favor of the great, the learned, the honored, the gay, the amiable, the moral. It is addressed to all men, in all climes, and in all ages of the world. It comes, therefore, to us, and is laid across our path. Repentance is here urged as the *command* of the Almighty. In other places it is declared to be indispensable to salvation, and we are assured that unless we repent we shall perish.

Yet men have many objections to yielding obedience to this command of God. At one time they allege, or they would allege if they were to express the real feelings of the heart, that they have done nothing which requires repentance. They have done no wrong which they have not endeavored to repair, and they are conscious of no crime. They are not idolators; they have not been guilty of murder, or robbery, or fraud, or falsehood. Their lives have been upright, and why should they weep? At another time it is said, that repentance is wholly beyond the power of man; that it is a work which can only be performed by the aid of God; and the expression of wonder is scarce withheld that a command should be urged to do that which it is known will never be done but by divine assistance. At another time it is alleged, that the requirement is wholly arbitrary; that the terms of salvation have in themselves no intrinsic value or necessity; and that it is unreasonable that God should suspend eternal salvation on the exercise of repentance and faith. Why, it is asked, has he selected from all the exercises of mind these *two* as those in connexion with which he will be-



stow salvation? Why these more than love, or hope, or joy, or zeal? Is there any such intrinsic fitness or value in sorrow and in faith in Christianity as to justify this selection as constituting the only ground of salvation? And why in this arrangement has he chosen these mere *emotions of the heart* in preference to a correct moral character as the conditions of his favor? Would it not be more worthy of God to make eternal life depend on virtue and benevolence; on honesty and truth; on the faithful discharge of our duties in the family and in public life, than on regret for the past, and on the mere exercise of faith? And why is it that he requires the man of many years and many virtues, and the youth of great amiableness and purity, to renounce all confidence in these virtues and all dependence on them, and to approach God weeping over the errors of a life? Can he require feigned sorrow? Can there be virtue in forced and affected tears? Again it is asked, why has God made the path to heaven a path of sorrow? Why must we go with the head bowed down with grief? Why has he made the road a thorn-hedge, and not planted it with roses? Are there no joyous emotions that might have been made the condition of salvation; nothing that would make the eye bright, and the heart cheerful, and the soul glad, that might have been selected of at least equal value with pensiveness and a heavy heart; with melancholy and tears?

Such are some of the feelings that spring up in the mind when we come to men and urge upon them the duty of repentance. My desire is, if possible, to meet these feelings, and to convince you that they are unfounded. I shall aim to show you that the requisition of repentance is not arbitrary, but that it is founded in the nature of things, and that a man **MUST REPENT** if he will ever enter into the kingdom of God. In doing this, I shall submit to your attention a series of observations, which will have a direct bearing on the case before us.

I. In the first place, repentance is a simple operation of mind understood by all persons, and in some form practised by all. You cannot find a person who at some time has not exercised repentance. You cannot find a child who needs to be told what is meant by being re

quired to repent when he has done a wrong thing ; and in the emotions of a child, when he feels sorrow that he has done wrong, and who resolves to make confession of it and to do so no more, you have the elements of all that God requires of man as a condition of salvation. You have broken the commands of a father. His law was plain ; his will was clear. When the deed is performed, you reflect on what you have done. You see that his command was right ; that you have done wrong by breaking his law, and have incurred his just displeasure. He has always treated you kindly ; his commands have never been unreasonable ; and you cannot justify yourself in what you have done. You see that you have done wrong. By a law of your nature you feel pain or distress that you did the wrong. You resolve that you will go and confess it, and that you will do so no more. This is repentance ; and this is the whole of it. You have a friend. He has a thousand times, and in a thousand ways, laid you under obligation. He has helped you in pecuniary distress ; shared your losses ; attended you in sickness ; defended your reputation when attacked. He himself, in turn, suffers. Wicked men blacken and defame his character, and a cloud rolls upon him and overwhelms him. In an evil hour *your* mind is poisoned, and you forget all that he has done for you, and you join in the prevalent suspicion and error in regard to him, and give increased currency to the slanderous reports. Subsequently you reflect that it was all wrong ; that you acted an ungrateful part ; that you suffered your mind to be too easily influenced to forget your benefactor, and that you have done him great and lasting injury. You are pained at the heart. You resolve that you will go to him and make confession, and that you will implore forgiveness, and that you will endeavor as far as possible to undo the evil. This is repentance ; and this is all. Let these simple elements be transferred to God and to religion, and you have all that is included in repentance. Be as honest towards God as you have been many a time toward a parent or a friend, and you will have no difficulty on the subject. You will see that it was neither arbitrary nor unreasonable. The difficulty is, when you approach religion you are determined to find something unintelligible,

severe, and harsh, and you at once suppose that God in his arrangement is arbitrary and unkind.

I said that repentance was well understood by all persons, and practised by all. Nothing is more common on earth;—on earth only. The angels in heaven having never sinned have nothing of which to repent; and of course it is unknown there. Devils, though having sinned long and much, have yet felt no regret at their crime, and have never been disposed to go and ask for pardon; and there is no repentance among them. Sinners that descend from our world to the world of wo, go beyond the reach of mercy and the desire of pardon, and there is no penitence in hell. But on earth what is more common? Who is there that has not exercised repentance? Who is there that has never felt that he has done wrong, and that has resolved that he would do so no more? No inconsiderable portion of every man's life is made up of regrets for the errors and follies of the past. No small part of the sighs and groans of the world are the bitter fruit of mistakes and crimes. No small part of the recollections of an old man are made up of remembrances of days of folly and of subsequent regret; of the indulgence of appetite and passion, and of the bitterly lamented fruits; of wrong thoughts, and wrong words, and wrong deeds over which he has had abundant leisure to mourn. These feelings occur on the remembrance of errors, follies, crimes. They invade the mind because we feel that we have done *wrong*, and that we *ought* to have done differently. They are not arbitrary. They are the operations of the regular laws of the mind; and they are operations which a generous and noble heart would not wish to check or prevent.

If such feelings actually occur on the recollection of the past, it is natural to ask why we should not expect to find them in religion? We see repentance every where else, and manifested in every man's life. We perceive regrets at the past starting up in the minds of men of all ages and all lands; and why shall it be regarded as strange that it is required in a system of religion designed to recall the world from error and from sin?

Further; the most deep and pungent feelings which men ever have are found in regrets for the crimes of the past. The mind no where else knows emotions so over-



whelming and so torturing, as in the recollections of past guilt. And why, then, should deep emotion be deemed strange or unreasonable in religion? Why should it be regarded as fanatical that the soul should be burdened with a sense of guilt when it comes back to God? If you feel pained when you recollect that you have wounded the feelings of a friend; if your mind is overwhelmed when you think of disobedience towards a parent, whether now living or dead; if you are overwhelmed when you are made conscious that you have been guilty of great ingratitude, I ask why may we not expect that there will be deep feeling in the return of a sinner to God? The sins which you have committed against a friend, a parent, or an earthly benefactor, are trifles when compared with the sins which we have committed against our heavenly friend, parent, benefactor. David was guilty of two of the most aggravated offences which can be committed against human laws. That he felt the criminality of these offences as committed against *man* no one can doubt; but great as this consciousness of guilt was when regarded as committed against *man*, it was absorbed and lost when he contemplated his offence as committed against God. "Against thee, THEE ONLY," said he, "have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Ps. li. 4. My wonder is not that men feel deeply when they exercise true repentance and become Christians, nor is it that here and there one is so overwhelmed as to be driven to permanent derangement. It is a matter of marvel that they feel so little; and a subject of praise and thanksgiving that in nearly every instance the divine mercy interposes, and the voice of pardon is heard speaking to the soul, before the anxious and guilty sinner sinks into despair.

II. My second proposition is, that God may appoint his own terms of mercy, and that man has no right to complain if he requires him to exercise repentance as a condition of salvation. This general proposition is true in relation to every thing, that God may appoint his own terms on which his favors may be enjoyed, and that man has neither the right to dictate nor complain. Health is his gift; and he has the absolute right—a right which he is constantly exercising—to state to man on what terms



it may be enjoyed ; and if he does not choose to comply with those terms, God will not depart from his settled laws to give him health by miracle. Life is his gift, and he has a right to say on what terms it shall be enjoyed ; property is his gift, and he has a right to say to man how it may be possessed. In like manner, pardon is the gift of God, and he has a right to say on what terms it may be obtained. An offender against law has no right to demand forgiveness ; nor has he any more right to prescribe the terms on which it may be obtained. Heaven is God's home ; and he has a right to say to men on what terms they may be admitted to live with him. Assuredly men cannot claim of God the *right* to be admitted to heaven, and to prescribe to him the terms on which he will receive them to favor there. If, therefore, God has declared that repentance and faith are the indispensable conditions on which man may be admitted to favor and to heaven, no one can complain. The only appropriate question to ask is, whether *in fact* he *has* appointed them as the indispensable conditions. That settled, every question on the subject is at rest.

If we may illustrate great things by small, and appeal to men for the propriety of this to their own doings, I would observe that God is dealing with you in this respect just as you deal with your fellow-men. You have a house. It is your castle ; your home. No one has a right to come there without your consent. You will admit no one to your dwelling, or to your table, or to intercourse with your sons and daughters, who does not choose to comply with the reasonable conditions which you may choose to have observed—whether they be such merely as society has chosen to appoint in general, or such particular conditions as you may think good order in your house requires. Why complain of God if he does the same thing ? You are a parent. A child violates your commands. Do you not feel that you have a right to prescribe the terms on which he may obtain your forgiveness ? Do you not feel that pardon is yours, to bestow or withhold as you shall choose ? You have a friend ; or there is one who was your professed friend. He has greatly wronged you. The offence is undeniable ; it is admitted. Do you not feel that you have a right to prescribe to him the terms

on which he may be admitted to your favor and enjoy your friendship again? And if you should require that he should express regret, and confess the wrong, and repair the evil, would you think that he had a right to complain of you? And would you think it a sufficient answer to this if he should say, that he had no power to do it, or that you might have planted the path of return with flowers rather than with thorns? How obvious the answer that it would be as easy to make the confession, as to do the wrong, and that as to the *thorns* in the case, *he* planted them by his own wrong-doing, and not you. And since we every where claim the right to say on what terms those who have injured us may again be permitted to partake of our favors, why should we complain of our Maker if the same thing occurs under his government?

The proposition, therefore, that God has a right to appoint his own terms of favor cannot be disputed. If *repentance* be one of the conditions, he has a right to say that this is indispensable to obtaining his favor. You deem it an incumbrance, a clog, a hindrance to your return. But even if it were so, the question would be whether it would not still be wise to accept of salvation cumbered with temporary sorrow here in the hope of eternal glory hereafter, or whether it would be best to perish forever because God had appended such a condition to the offer of life. My remarks under this head tend to this, that even if the appointment *were wholly arbitrary*, God has a right to make it, and man has no right to complain.

III. My third proposition is, that when wrong has been done among men, the only way to obtain again the favor of those who have been injured is by repentance. No man who has done evil in any way can be restored to forfeited favor but by just this process of repentance—by a process involving all the elements of grief, shame, remorse, reformation, confession, that are demanded in religion. Let us recur to some of the former illustrations.

You are a father. A child does wrong. He violates your law; offends you; treats you with disrespect or scorn. He goes abroad and represents your government at home as severe, and gives himself up to unbridled dis-

sipation. Regardless of your commands and of your feelings, he becomes the companion of the dissipated and the vile; and with those companions wastes the fruits of your labors. Towards that son you cherish still all a father's feelings; but I may appeal to any such unhappy parent to say whether he would admit him to the same degree of confidence and favor as before without some evidence of repentance. You demand that he should express regret for the errors and follies of his life; you demand evidence that will be satisfactory to *you* that he will not do the same thing again; you require proof that he will be disposed by a virtuous life to repair as far as possible, the injury which he has done you; and the moment you hear him sincerely say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son," that moment you are ready to go out and meet him, and to throw your arms around his neck and to forgive him.—You have had a friend. You thought him sincere. But he betrayed you; and in feeling, in property, in character you have been made to suffer by him. I ask any man whether he can receive such a friend again to his bosom, and press him to his heart, without some evidence of regret at what he has done, and some proof that he will not do it again? You cannot do it. You cannot force your nature to do it. The sea might as well break over the iron bound shore, or the river flow back and again climb up the mountain side where it leaped down in cascades, as for you to do it. You will convince yourself in *some way* that he REGRETS what he has done, and that he will not do it again, or you can *never* receive him again with the confidence of a friend. Your nature is as firm on this point as the everlasting hills, and is, in this respect, but the counter-part and the image of God, who does the same thing.—In like manner it is with those who have committed offences against a community. Of the man who has been guilty of theft, burglary, arson, or forgery, and who has been sentenced and punished for these offences, the community demand evidence that he has repented of the crime, and that he purposes to do so no more, before it will admit him again to its favor. If you go into his cell and find him alone on his knees be-



fore God confessing the sin ; if you see in him the evidence of regret and sorrow that it was done ; if you believe that the reformation is entire and sincere, the community will again receive him to its bosom, and will forgive and forget the past, and he may rise to public confidence, and even to affluence and honor. But if none of these things are seen ; if he spends the years of his sentence sullen and hardened, and profane, and without one sigh or tear, he is never forgiven. He may have paid the penalty of the law, but he is not forgiven ;—and he goes forth to meet the frowns of an indignant community, to be watched with an eagle eye, and to be excluded all his life from the affections and confidence of mankind. Universally it is true that where an offence has been committed and there is evidence of repentance, the offender may be restored to favor ; where there is no regret, shame, the curse of man and of his Maker alike rest upon him.

IV. My fourth proposition is, that in the actual course of events under the divine administration, it is only in connexion with repentance that forfeited favors can be recovered. I do not mean to say that repentance will always repair the evil of the past ; that it will restore to a man the money which he has squandered by dissipation ; that it will recover the health which has been lost by vicious indulgence, or that it will recall to life the man that has been murdered. But my meaning is, that if a man who has done wrong is ever restored in any measure to the forfeited favor of God it will be in connection with repentance. A process of repentance, similar to that required by the Christian religion, is inevitable, and unless that exist, the forfeited favor can never be regained. A man has wasted his health and property by intemperance. He was once in comfortable circumstances ; saw around him a happy family ; was respected and beloved ; enjoyed health, and was rising to affluence. He yielded to temptation, and all is now swept away.—Peace has fled from his dwelling, and his wife sits in poverty and in tears, and his children are growing up in idleness and vice, and he is fast hastening to a drunkard's grave. Is there any way, now, by which health, and domestic peace, and property, and respectability may be recovered ? There is. But how ? By this course. He



will *reflect* on his sin and folly. He will feel deeply pained at the evil he has done. He will lament that course of life which has taken comfort and peace from his dwelling. He will resolve to forsake the ways of sin, and will abandon forever the intoxicating bowl. He will reform his life, and become sober, industrious, and kind—and health may again revisit his frame, and peace his family, and his farm will again be fenced, and ploughed, and sown, and the rich harvest will again wave in the summer sun. But this is the very way in which God requires the sinner to come back to himself. He requires him to reflect on the past; to feel as he ought that he has pursued a guilty course; to break off his transgressions, and to lead a different life. Why should it be thought more strange in religion than in the actual course of events?

The same is true of a gambler. He has been led on by the arts of temptation till he has lost his all. He had received a competence as the heir to a wealthy father. Now it is all gone. From one step to another he has been drawn into temptation with amazing rapidity, till he is now stript of all, and is penniless, and is ready to give himself up to despair. Is there any way by which he can emerge from this depth of woes, and become a man of respectability and property again? There is one, and but one way. It is a straight and a narrow path—like that which leads to heaven. It will not be found by treading on in the blighted and parched way in which he is now going. It will be by the following process. He will *reflect* on the folly and the guilt of his course. He will feel pain and regret at the remembrance of that sad hour when he yielded to temptation. He will mourn in the bitterness of his soul over that dark day. He will resolve that he will never enter a gambling room again, and that he will devote his life to a course of steady industry and virtue;—and the confidence of his fellow-men he may regain, and God will bestow on him wealth and respectability. But this is substantially the way in which a sinner is to return to God. This is repentance.

So in respect to indolence, vice, dissipation, crime in all forms. If men ever turn back these evils; if they ever

arrest this descending curse ; if they ever escape from the withering and blighting influence which pursues the wicked, it *must* be in connexion with repentance. If there is no evidence of repentance and reform, that withering and blighting influence will pursue the individual over sea and land, to the end of the world and to the end of life. He can never escape the curse of violating the laws of heaven until he gives evidence of sincere sorrow for what he has done. But the moment that is done, the avenger ceases to pursue him ; friends come again around him ; and he finds peace in his own bosom, and in every man he finds a friend.

V. The necessity of repentance could not be avoided by any arrangement whatever. It *must* exist whenever there is returning love to God ; and had it not have been required in a formal manner as a condition of salvation, still it would have been true that no sinner would ever have returned from his ways and come back to God, without exercising repentance.

A moment's reflection will satisfy any one of this. The law of God requires LOVE to him as to the supreme rule of life. That law man has violated ; and the gospel requiring repentance meets him as a sinner, and requires him to return to the love of God. Now no alienated man can come back to this love of God without regret that he wandered away from him. To return to my former illustration. A child is bound to love his father. He fails to evince the love which he ought to, and becomes disobedient. Can that child be brought back from the state of alienation, and have his bosom glow with love, with no regret that he has not showed that love before ? Can he now look on the excellence of his father's character, and the reasonableness of his laws, and feel no regret that he has not always loved him, and obeyed him ? Can he look over that long, dark period, which has passed in alienation, and feel that he had done no wrong, and experience no self-condemnation ? It could not be. Not thus is the human heart made ; and he who has ever come back from alienation to love has returned with regret and tears.

Love is the grand principle on which God intends to bind all worlds in harmony. It is the central virtue

whose influence is radiated over all others. God *might* have governed the universe by terrors, and by flames, and by the dread of stripes, and by chains, and adamantine walls. But he designed to make love the great principle of his administration every where, and it was presumed that this was enough. It *is* enough. If in a family you can secure proper *love* between a husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, it is enough. You may lay aside your rod, and dismiss your system of terrors. If in a neighborhood you can secure *love*—the love of one neighbor for another, it is enough. There will be no brawls; no law-suits; no heart-burnings. If in a nation you can secure *love* it is enough. If there is the love of country in every bosom leading all to a readiness to defend that country's rights; if there is the love of law, and justice; if there is the love of a people towards their rulers, and of rulers for their people, it would be enough. You might shut up your prisons, and dismiss your judges and juries, for there would be universal harmony. And so among the nations. If there were every where the love of God and man; if there reigned in every human bosom the love of a brother and of human rights; you might dismantle your forts, and disband your armies, and the sword might be left to rust in the scabbard, and the ship of war be left to decay on the stocks. In his government, God intends that this principle shall have the ascendancy and shall rule. It will be the same principle in the bosoms of angels and of men. It will bind the most lofty spirit of the skies to his throne, and the most humble among the saints on earth—like the mighty law which binds planets in their orbits, and which bids the floating particle of dust to seek the centre. Had this love been always shown, there would have been no sin, no crime, no war, no death.

But it has *not* been shown always on earth. The impenitent sinner has never had the love of God in his heart. He has been, and he is, an alienated being. This he knows; and this he feels in that moment when he is pondering the question whether he shall return to God. Every man knows that he has not loved God as he ought to have done, and the impenitent man may see, if he will see, that from the first dawn of his being to the



present moment he has not put forth one single expression of genuine love to his Maker. Now if this alienated being comes back to God, it will be only by repentance. He will, he must feel regret at this long and wasted period of his life which has been spent in estrangement from God. He will look with deep emotion on the many mercies which his Maker has conferred on him; or with amazement on the fact that to this moment he has abused them all. No man ever yet passed from hatred to love without experiencing regret, remorse, and sorrow at his former course of life, and without passing through a process similar to that which God requires of the returning sinner. And no man ever did, or can return to God from whom he has been alienated without feeling and expressing regret that he has wandered, and without a purpose to do so no more. At the remembrance of his sins and of the abused mercies of God; at the view of the goodness which has kept him in all his wanderings, and especially of the mercy which sought him in the gift of a Saviour, and of the death of the Redeemer for these very sins, he must feel and weep, and he cannot return without bitter regrets that he abused so much love and slighted so much mercy. Returning love, and a sense of God's goodness will be attended with sorrow of heart that he ever wandered, and with a full purpose to do so no more:—and this is repentance. How could God be willing to admit the wanderer to his favor unless he were willing to do as much as this?

I might add that it would be impossible for a man to be happy in heaven unless he had repented of the errors and follies of the past. The man who has injured you—could *he* be happy in your family unless he had repented of the wrong done, and obtained your forgiveness? Were you ever happy in the presence of the man that you had wronged until you confessed it and obtained pardon? Your whole nature is *against* such a supposition, and it can never be. The deepest misery that we can well imagine would be to be doomed to live forever with those whom we have wronged; to feel that they knew it; to be reminded of it every time we caught their eye, and yet to be too proud or wicked to confess it and ask for pardon: and how then could an impenitent sinner be happy in the



presence of a much injured Saviour, and of a God of abused mercy forever and ever?

In view of the positions which I have endeavored to defend in this discourse, I may remark,

1. That Christianity is not an arbitrary institution. Its requirements are founded in the nature of things. It would have been impossible to save sinners, or to have made them happy, without repentance—and Christianity has simply *said that*. It has appointed nothing arbitrary; nothing unmeaning. It has demanded that which *must* exist; which *does* exist in all similar circumstances; and which *would* have occurred in the case of every sinner coming back to God even if it had not been formally required.

2. Evil is often done by representing the operations of the mind in religion as in their nature essentially different from mental operations on other subjects. As a mere operation of mind, how can repentance in religion differ from repentance exercised towards an injured parent or friend? The mental operation is simple and easily understood, and all are familiar with it. Who is there here who has never repented of any thing that he has done? Who that has not confessed a wrong? Who that does not now feel that he has much to regret in the past, and that there is much which he *ought* to confess? Be as honest toward God as you have been toward a parent, lover, or friend, and you would have no difficulty on the subject of repentance. It would be easy to be understood, and your difficulties would all soon vanish. Yet when you approach religion, you expect and desire to find every thing cold, repulsive, unreal, arbitrary, and impossible—and are unwilling to believe that religion is the most simple of all things, and that it is in entire accordance with all the laws of the human mind. What is needful is to bring the whole subject of religion back to “the simplicity that is in Christ;” to take away the technicalities of the “schools,” and to see that in simplicity it is adapted to children; in sublimity and power it is in accordance with the laws which govern the highest intellects on earth or in heaven.

3. Repentance is not beyond the proper exercise of the power of man. Every man practices it. Every child

repents. Every one has at different times felt regret at something that he has done; has made confession; has resolved to do so no more; has turned from the evil course. This is repentance; and no one in such a case has resorted to any plea that it was impossible or that it was unreasonable. It is only in religion that we hear that it is unreasonable, and that it is beyond a man's power. But why should it be *there* more than elsewhere? Why easy any where else; why impossible there? The answer is simple. It is, that men *wish* to find an excuse for not repenting; and regardless of any reflections on the character of their Maker, rather than forsake their sins, they charge him with requiring that which is impossible, and coolly say that they have no power to obey his commands. Every where else it is easy in their view to repent, here they say it is impossible, and is only to be done by the Almighty power of God.

4. It is the sinner who is to repent. It is not God who is to repent for him—for God has done no wrong. It is not the Saviour who is to repent for him—for he has violated no law. It is not the Holy Spirit that is to repent—for how can that blessed Agent feel sorrow, and why should he? My impenitent friend, *it is your own mind* that is to repent; your own heart that is to feel regret; your own feet that are to be turned from the evil way; your own lips that are to make confession. I know that if ever done it will be by the aid of God the Holy Ghost; but I know also that **YOU ARE YOURSELF** to be the penitent, and that this is a work that cannot be done by another. That very heart that has sinned must feel; those very eyes that have looked with delight on forbidden objects must weep; and those lips that have been false, profane, or impure, must make confession. I will add here, that God is willing to impart to you all the grace which is needful to enable you to repent if you are willing, for he has “exalted Christ Jesus to give repentance and the remission of sins.” With his offered and promised grace you can never allege before him that repentance was wholly put beyond your power.

5. Finally, it is right and proper to call on men to repent of their sins. If they repent when they have wronged a friend, or violated the laws of a parent; if repentance is

an operation of mind with which all are familiar ; if it is not beyond the proper reach of the human faculties ; and if the sinner himself is actually to feel sorrow and make confession, and if you have in fact violated the law of God, *then* it is right to call on you to repent at once.— This command, then, I lay across your path to-day, and call on you to repent of all your sins, and to make confession unto God. It is a command reasonable, proper, easy, imperative ;—and I end as I began by saying that it is as positive as any other in the Bible ; that it is simple and easily understood ; that it is addressed to all, and that there are no exceptions made in favor of the great, the learned, the honored, the gay, the amiable, the moral. We shall all alike die ; and when we come to die it will be one of the sincerest wishes of our souls that we had honestly yielded obedience to ALL the commands of God ; one of the sincerest wishes of our hearts that we had confessed and forsaken our sins before we were called to stand at the awful bar of our final Judge.

## SERMON X.

### SALVATION EASY.

Matthew xi. 30. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

ALL religion, like virtue of all kinds, implies restraint. The Saviour did not come to institute a religion that would be without law, or that would give unrestrained indulgence to the passions. He did not come to establish a religion where there would be no burden to be borne, no cross to be taken up. He speaks, therefore, in the text, of his religion as a '*yoke*'—the emblem of restraint; of a '*burden*'—the emblem of obligation, implying that there were duties to be discharged and conditions of salvation to be complied with. But he says that the one was '*easy*,' the other '*light*.' Compared with the heavy yoke of Jewish rites and ceremonies, (Acts xv. 10;) compared with the oppressive burdens of the heathen systems of religion every where; and compared with the yoke which fashion, and ambition, and corrupt passions impose on their votaries every where, the yoke which he required his followers to bear was easy, and the burden light. It was not a hard thing to be a Christian; it was not difficult to be saved. In illustrating this truth, my object will be,

I. To show that salvation is easy; and

II. To show why it is so.

I. Salvation is made easy for mankind.

I know that this proposition is one that will not be conceded to be true by all men. It stands opposed to many feelings of the human heart, as well as to some sentiments maintained by a part of the Christian world. It is not introduced here for controversy, nor will my discussion of it be pursued for purposes of debate, but with reference to some prevalent *feelings* in the minds of men. It is felt by many to whom we preach, that salvation is difficult, or wholly impracticable for them. The feeling assumes a great variety of forms, for the existence of which we have only to appeal to your consciousness. It



is felt by some that God has provided *no* salvation for a large part of the human family; or that the Holy Spirit strives with only a part of the race; or that God is insincere in his offers of salvation; or that he has determined by unalterable decree those who shall, and those who shall not be saved; or that man has no power to repent or believe, and that should he put forth all possible efforts, they would be utterly fruitless. At one time an impenetrable obscurity seems to rest on the whole subject of religion, and the mind of the sinner is in thick darkness; at another he feels that his sins are so strong that he has no power to overcome them; at another that some invisible power thwarts all his efforts and blasts all his purposes; and at another that salvation resembles some object in heaven to be brought down like bringing Christ again from the skies, or is like crossing the mighty deep to seek for it on a pilgrimage in the dreariness of a distant land. It is this feeling which I wish to meet in defence of the proposition derived from our text, that *salvation is easy*. There are three considerations which I trust will make it clear; or three sources of argument to which I shall refer you.

(1.) The first is, that such is the express testimony of the Bible. To this I appeal as perfectly plain on the point, and as meeting all the difficulties which are felt in the case. I appeal to the following passage, the very design of which is to state this truth with the utmost explicitness. "The righteousness which is of faith," or the plan of salvation in the gospel, "speaketh in this wise, say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above; or, who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Rom. x. 6—9. The meaning is, the Christian religion does not require us to ascend into heaven—to perform an impossible work like going up to the throne of God, and bringing the Mediator down. It does not require us to go into the abyss, the grave, the regions of

departed souls, and perform a work like raising a man from the dead. It demands an easier task—one that lies within the proper exercise of human power. It demands, says Paul, simply a confession with the mouth of the Lord Jesus, and a belief in the heart that God raised him from the dead. And is this all, and is it then an erroneous inference, that Paul meant to teach that salvation is easy; that it demands no impracticable thing, and nothing which lies beyond the proper compass of human responsibility?

I appeal, in further confirmation of this position, to the following plain declarations of the Bible. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” Isa. lv. 1. 3.—Is it impossible to incline the ear and hear? To come and buy?—“Behold,” said the Saviour, “I stand at the door and knock: if *any man* will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me.” Rev. iii. 20.—Is it impossible for a man to open his door for a friend, or for a stranger? “And the Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst, come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life *freely*.” Rev. xxii. 17.—Is it impossible for the thirsty to drink at a running fountain? “Come unto me,” said the Redeemer, “all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matth. xi. 28—30. “In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” John vii. 37. These passages, it will at once occur to you, are but a specimen of the language of the Scripture on the subject, and the meaning of such language cannot be mistaken. It is as far as possible from any representation that the provisions of salvation are limited in their nature or design; or that man is incapacitated from embracing the offer; or that there are, from any cause whatever, insuperable obstacles to his salvation. If there are

passages in the Scripture which speak of difficulties and obstacles of any kind to the salvation of men—as there are, undoubtedly—they are such as refer to obstacles *on the part of man*, and not on the part of God; obstacles which the sinner has himself formed, and not those which arise from any want of fulness in the provisions which God has made, or any want of willingness on his part to save the soul.

(2.) The second consideration to which I refer for proof on this point is, that the difficulties which *did* exist in regard to salvation, and which man could not have overcome, have all been taken away by the plan of salvation. A specification of a few of these difficulties will illustrate the idea which I now present. One of these obstacles related to pardon. Man had sinned. And yet it is manifest that he could not be self-pardoned, nor could he be pardoned by a fellow man, nor by the highest angel. It was only the being whose law had been violated, and who had been offended, that could extend forgiveness. A neighbor cannot pardon your child who has done wrong to you; nor can a foreign government pardon a traitor to his country; nor can a murderer pardon himself. The solution of the question whether the offender could or could not be pardoned under the divine government, was one that was lodged in the bosom of God, and over which man had no control. Pardon could not be extorted—for man had no power to do this; it could not be demanded—for then it would not be pardon, but justice; it could not be purchased by gold or pearls—for of what value are they to the Creator of all things; it could not be procured by penance, and self-inflicted pains—for what merit is there in uncommended self-torture? Yet all this difficulty has been removed. What all the gold and diamonds of the East could not purchase, has been offered as a free gift to all. None are so poor that they may not procure it; none are so guilty that it may not be freely bestowed upon them. A kindred difficulty related to the atonement. It was just as true that man could make no atonement for his sins, as it was that he could not of himself secure pardon. Nor had he any thing which he could offer as an expiation for the past. “Will the LORD be pleased with thousands



of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Mic. vi. 7. Man had nothing which could be a compensation, or an atonement for his past sins; and after all the efforts, the costly oblations, the gorgeous ceremonials, and the bloody sacrifices, and the painful penances of the pagan world, man is just as far from having made any suitable atonement, as he was when Cain brought his uncommended and unacceptable offering to the offended Creator. And it would have been so to the end of time. Unless man could *do* something, or *offer* something that would repair the evils of apostacy, how could he make an atonement for his sins? But this difficulty has been removed. An ample atonement has been made. There is no more that needs to be done; and there is no more that can be done. The atonement is sufficient in its nature for all men. The death of Christ is declared to be the "propitiation for the sins of the whole world." It is expressly affirmed that he "died for all"; that he "tasted death for every man." Nothing on this subject remains to be desired; and no man can now approach God feeling that there is the slightest difficulty in the way of his salvation from any want of sufficiency in the provisions of the atonement; any want of willingness in the Redeemer to save him; or any want of efficacy in his blood to cleanse from all sin. It is impossible for the human mind to conceive that there should be a more complete and entire removal of *all* obstacles in any case, or in relation to any subject whatever, than has occurred in regard to the plan of the atonement through Jesus Christ. Again—there was a difficulty also in regard to the love of sin. It was certain that while man had all the requisite power to do the will of God, he never would of himself yield to his claims, and forsake his transgressions. He was so alienated from God, that that alienation would have forever prevented his return to God, even had there been no other obstacle. But God has met this difficulty also. What man would not do, he has provided the means of his accomplishing. To the sinner, sensible of the deep corruption of his own nature, he has granted the Holy Spirit, for the very purpose of



enabling him to overcome his love of sin, and of turning him to God. And there is not a depraved propensity of his nature which the Spirit of God cannot subdue; not an unholy affection which he cannot remove; not a corrupt desire which he cannot obliterate forever.

God has, in this manner, met all the obstacles which stood in the way of salvation. He has designed that every thing on his part that can be regarded as a difficulty, should be removed; and that he should himself be able to approach men with the assurance that so far as *he* was concerned, there should be no obstacle to perfect and eternal reconciliation. He has devised a plan through which he can consistently offer full pardon, and so that he will be as fully glorified in the salvation as in the condemnation of the sinner. He has gone even beyond this, and has met man on his own side of the difficulty, and furnished him with the means of overcoming the sinfulness of the heart itself. The case is like this. When two of your neighbors are engaged in a controversy which has been long continued, you gain much if you can go to the party that has done the wrong, and say, 'Your injured neighbor is willing to be reconciled. Every difficulty which had existed in his mind has been removed, and he now desires to be at peace. By great self-denial and sacrifice, though without compromising his own dignity or honor, he has removed all the obstacles which subsisted to perfect harmony, and he is now desirous of walking with you in the bonds of unity and concord.' So God approaches every impenitent man. With the assurance that all the obstacles on *his* part have been removed, he comes and offers life. He proclaims that every thing which man could not have done in this case, but which was needful to be done, has been accomplished, and that all that remains for the sinner is easy, and may be and should be performed.

(3.) The third consideration in support of my position is, that the *terms* of salvation are the most simple that they possibly could be. It is not only true that God has removed all the obstacles which existed on his part to salvation, but it is also true that he has made the conditions as easy as it is possible to conceive them to be.

These terms are repeated often in the Bible. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "With the heart," Paul adds, "man believeth unto righteousness," *i. e.* unto justification, or in connection with believing he becomes justified; "and with the mouth confession" *i. e.* profession "is made unto salvation;" and the sense of the whole is, that simple reliance on the Lord Jesus in the heart, and a suitable acknowledgment of him before men will be crowned with everlasting salvation. Now the remark is obvious, that these terms are as simple and as easy as it is possible to conceive *any* terms to be. If man himself were to choose his own terms of salvation, he could not select any more easy than God has himself appointed. It is not gold which he demands; it is not a costly offering; it is not painful penance; it is not stripes, or imprisonment, or a pilgrimage to a distant land. It is an act of simple confidence in Jesus Christ, and a suitable acknowledgment of him before the world at large. And that man himself could not ask more simple and easy terms, is apparent from the fact that when left to his own way, he has uniformly chosen some method infinitely more painful and self-denying than the gospel requires. He seeks salvation by costly offerings and bloody rites, by painful fastings and penances; by scourging, and torture, and self-inflicted woes; by pilgrimages over barren rocks and burning sands to some distant shrine of his idol god; but no where has man ever thought of a plan of salvation requiring so little personal sacrifice, and so little that is painful as the Christian plan. This stands alone, as admirable for the ease of compliance with it, as for the simplicity of its aim. It requires no impracticable thing. It is simply demanding that that should be exercised towards God our Saviour which is every day exercised towards men. We exercise confidence every day in a father, a mother, a neighbor, a civil ruler; in a bank, a mercantile house, a book, and a promise; and God demands that similar confidence should be reposed in him, and in that Redeemer whom he hath sent. The reasonableness of this is not the object of our present re-

search. It is the fact to which I am referring, and the remark is, that in a scheme of salvation nothing more simple than this could be conceived ; and that God could not possibly require less. When a child has rebelled against his father, can that father do less than require proofs of returning confidence in him before he can readmit him to favor ? When a professed friend has injured you in every way possible, can you do less than to demand proofs of returning confidence before you can treat him as a friend ? Can there be any friendship, any union, unless that confidence shall be restored ?

I regard, therefore, the proposition as one that is undeniable, that salvation is made as easy by God as possible ; and that the terms are as simple and as practicable as can be conceived.

II. My second object is, to enquire why he has done so, or why he has selected the simple conditions to which I have referred, as those by which we may be saved.

It is undeniable, that it is on account of the very simplicity of this plan that multitudes reject it. Had it been attended with greater difficulties ; had it required penance, and toil, and pilgrimages, it would have excited much greater interest in the minds of a large portion of the world. This is proved conclusively from the fact that the most painful and degrading of the heathen religions excite deeper interest among their votaries than the Christian scheme does in a nominally Christian community. Every pagan is devoted to his religion, and holds all that he possesses as at the disposal of his gods ; nor does he deem any sacrifice too great, any penance too severe, any pilgrimage too long, if he may secure the favor of the fancied god. In a large portion of the community, however, where the gospel is preached, it excites no emotion, and prompts to no effort to secure an interest in it. By multitudes it is regarded as deserving contempt ; by multitudes with hatred and indignation. It is still to one class a stumbling-block, to another foolishness. One reason undoubtedly is, the very ease of its terms ; the fact that it appeals to all men as on a level ; that it contemplates the salvation of the rich and the poor, the bond and the free, the master and the slave, on the same conditions, and *all* as without personal merit, and all as to



be saved by mere favor, without money and without price. My wish is now to state some reasons why God has appointed salvation on conditions so simple and easy.

(1.) One is, that the design of bestowing salvation on all classes of men, demanded of necessity some plan that was plain to be understood, and that was easy to be complied with. The mass of men are poor, and ignorant, and debased. They have no gold to offer—if gold were of value in obtaining heaven; they are incapable of long and painful pilgrimages—if pilgrimages would be of any avail. If a scheme of religion is adapted to our race, it must be fitted to the poor, the needy, the slave, the ignorant, and the wretched. It must be so easy that even children could appreciate and comprehend its essential elements. And this was and ought to have been the object. It was not to save the rich only, and philosophers only, and the great only—for their souls are of no more value than the souls of others; but it was to save men deeply depraved, and ignorant, and degraded. Besides, the design of religion is not to go to those who are *already* elevated and happy, but to go down to the poor, the beggar, and the slave, to elevate them to the skies.

The religion of the gospel, therefore, contemplated as a leading purpose, what has not been attempted, or if attempted, what has been unsuccessful in other systems. Its design was to elevate and save the mass of men, and at the same time, and in the same way, to save the more learned and refined of the race. It entered on the before untried task of adapting itself to the most degraded and vile of the human family; and at the same time of presenting such truths as should expand and sanctify the most profound intellects on earth, and be fitted to the largest views which the human mind can form. And it is done. It has truths which are fitted to excite the amazement of the most lofty intellects, and into which the angels desire to look; truths over which Bacon and Newton bowed with the most profound reverence; and it is at the same time so simple that it is understood in its mean features in the Sunday-school, and can communicate its saving messages to the beggar that lies at the gate. All may be saved by it; and the lofty intellect of the one class will feel that it is elevated by the gospel as



well as the feeble powers of the other ; the large heart of the one will feel that the gospel is as much fitted to promote its sanctification as it is to promote the eternal purity of the other ; and the farthest extremes of the human family are met by that simple and pure system which requires as its great conditions repentance toward God and faith in Christ Jesus.

(2.) The system is *designed* to humble men, and was on that account made so simple and plain. It cannot be denied that it is fitted to bring down the intellect and the heart of man. To be saved by mere favor ; to enter heaven by special grace ; to be saved by the mere exercise of faith, without merit and without claim, is deeply abasing to the pride of man. God intended that it should be so, and one purpose of the plan was to "stain the pride of all human glory." Hence the gospel pays tribute to no rank, wealth, learning, or power. It seeks out no palace as its residence—and is as much at home in the cottage as in the most magnificent dwelling. It reveals no royal path to heaven. It saves no man because he is clothed in purple and fine linen. It comes into no dwelling because it is splendidly decorated, and garnished ; and it offers bliss to no one because he is attended by a splendid train of menials, or because men do him homage. It saves no one because he is beautiful, or because he is strong, or because he is learned, or because he is honored. It does not refuse to save them ; but it oftentimes passes by their abodes, and finds its home in the humble dwelling of the poor.

Is it not right that this should be so ? What is there in that beauty that will soon become the prey of corruption and banquet of worms, that should constitute a claim to salvation ? Is it more comely than the lily or the blushing rose that soon decays ? What is there in that splendid mansion that should attract the presence of the God who dwells in light inaccessible, and who is encompassed with the glory of heaven ? What is there in that pride of rank and office that should attract the great and eternal God to bestow his peculiar favors there ? What is there in the amusements and plans of the gay and the rich, that should induce the God of heaven to accommodate his plans to their caprice, and bend his schemes to their pleasure ?

Nothing. But there may be much, very much there, that shall demand just such a humbling system as the gospel—a system that shall level all that pride, and bring the gay and self-confident sinner to the dust. Does not the original taint of our fallen nature as deeply pervade his heart as the heart of the obscurest man? Is not the gay and fashionable, the rich and learned sinner as deeply sunk in depravity as the rest of his fellow-mortals? Has he not a heart as offensive to God as they have who are in humble life? Will not a few years bring that beauty and strength as low as the most degraded of the species? Will not the worm feed as sweetly on all that comeliness as on the most down-trodden of the race? And is it not well, is it not indispensable, that the system of religion should meet all this pride, and bring all this lofty-mindedness low in the dust? Men in their great interests are on a level, and Christianity simply recognizes this fact. Their food, their raiment, their health, their vigor, are all given by the same God. The same blood flows in their veins; they have the same pains and sicknesses when on a bed of disease; they are partakers of the same depravity; they lie side by side in the same bed of earth, and moulder back to dust together. Why should not the system of religion be framed as if this were so, and be so humiliating as to reduce the pride of all, and yet so elevating as to raise all to the hopes of the same heaven, and fill all alike with wonder at their own real dignity as immortal beings, and at the condescension of the infinite God?

(3.) God has made the system so simple and so easy, because the terms which he proposes are just fitted to meet all the evils of the world.

In the Bible he has made *faith* indispensable, and has attached an unspeakable importance to it. “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.” Two or three remarks will show why God has selected this, and has made its exercise the indispensable condition of salvation. One is, that the true source of all evil to man is a want of *confidence* in his Creator—a want of confidence in his promises, his law, his claims, his threatenings, his qualifications for universal empire. This want of confidence in

God has produced the same evils in his administration which it does any where. A want of confidence between a husband and wife annihilates their happiness, and turns their once peaceful dwelling into a hell; a want of confidence between parents and children is the end of order and government; a want of confidence in a friend, a physician, a lawyer, or a pastor, is the parent of distress and wo; a want of confidence in a commercial community is an end of prosperity. And so it is in the government of God. Man is wretched only because he has no confidence in his Creator. He does not worship him as God; he does not believe that he is wise; he does not go to him in trouble; he does not rely on his promises; he does not seek him in time of distress, he does not trust him in death. Now the only thing needful to make this a happy world, with all its sicknesses and sadnesses, is to restore *confidence in God*. This would meet all the evils of the apostasy, and would compose the agitated human bosom to peace—like oil on troubled waves. It will have just the effect under the divine government which it will have in a family, if you restore confidence to the alienated affections of husband and wife; and in a community, if you restore universal confidence between man and man. Another reason why this is required is, that God could require no less of man. In a plan of salvation intended to be adapted to all the race, that was the *lowest possible* demand, as we have already seen that it is the simplest and most easy. Could God admit alienated creatures to himself on any other condition than that they should have *confidence* in him? Could he admit those to heaven—to dwell with him, to range the fields of glory, to encompass his throne—who had no reliance in his qualifications for universal empire? Can you admit the man who has been your professed friend, but who has slandered and injured you, again to your friendship, without evidence of returning confidence and regard? Can a parent admit a rebellious and ungrateful child again to the fulness of his affection and to his family, if he has no evidence of returning confidence? God, therefore, requires *faith* in him, because he could require *no less*. It is the lowest possible condition. And for a similar reason, he requires that that faith should be avowed.



“With the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” The want of confidence has been open. The injury has been public. The life of a sinner has not been passed in a corner. It is public; it is known; it is seen. The want of confidence in God here on earth is known above the stars; and wherever there is returning confidence, it should be avowed, and the restored sinner should be desirous that his return to God should be as widely known as his apostasy has been. When a man has calumniated you publicly, it will not do for him to come and confess it to you alone, and in the dark. He has done you *public* wrong, and the confession should be *public*, too. The sinner should be willing, therefore, that all worlds shall be apprized of his return, and seek that throughout the universe it shall be proclaimed that he has confidence in the Creator. Thus he will not only believe in his heart on the Lord Jesus, but will confess him with his mouth, and desire that the universe shall be acquainted with his repentance and return.

I have thus endeavored to show that the plan of salvation is the most simple and easy that man could conceive or desire, and that it is proposed to man on the lowest possible terms, and on the terms which were indispensable in a design to save the world. There are some inferences following from the subject to which I now ask your attention for a moment.

1. One is, the necessity of a profession of religion. The view of the Lord Jesus on this subject has been expressed without any ambiguity. “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” Matth. x. 32, 33. And this appointment is not arbitrary. Its propriety and reasonableness are obvious. Why should a man enter heaven who is unwilling to acknowledge God his Saviour in all the proper ways on earth? Why should *he* hope for approbation or reward who seeks to hide his light under a bushel, and is ashamed to have it understood that he loves God? How can *he* expect the divine favor, all whose influence is with the world, and who habitually neglects, or deliberately refuses to obey a positive com-



mand of the Lord Jesus Christ? And how can he infer that he has any love to God, who is never willing to avow it; how can he have any true dependence on the Saviour who is unwilling to recognize it; how can he have any sympathy with him who is unwilling to take up his cross, and to suffer shame and reproach, if need be, in his cause? God, therefore, has put this subject just where all other things are put. And as we infer that a man has no friendship for us whose name and influence are with our enemies, and who never ranks himself with us; as we infer that a man has no love of country who prefers that his name should be enrolled among her enemies, and who never comes forth to fight her battles, or to advance her cause, so are we not to infer the same thing respecting the great truths and duties of religion? Every man who truly loves the Lord Jesus is required in a proper way to express that love; every man who does not in the proper way express that love, gives evidence that it has no existence in his heart.

(2.) We learn from our subject that men have no excuse if they are not Christians, and are not saved. We have seen that that salvation is proposed on the simplest terms possible, and on the lowest conditions on which God could offer it to guilty men. And no one can doubt this fact who ever looked at the scheme. Nor can any one doubt it who contemplates what it has done. Thousands and tens of thousands of the poor, the illiterate, the despised; thousands of children, as well as of the rich and the great, have embraced it, and been saved. But if this is so, then man is without excuse. Had it been a scheme fitted to an intellect above that of man, then he could not have been under obligation to embrace it. Had it required us to do a work like raising the dead, or creating a world, then man would have been free from blame if he did not embrace it. And in like manner, if God had required *all* to go on a pilgrimage to a distant land; or *all* to purchase salvation with gold, how few of the race could have availed themselves of the privilege, and been saved!

And thus, too, if it were dependent on any other impossibility, or any thing beyond the powers and capabilities of man, he would have been innocent in respecting

it. Nay, he would not only have been innocent in rejecting it, but would have been required to reject it. But none of these things can be pretended. It is as simple as it can be; so plain that he that runs may read; as wide in its offers as the world; and it is offered to men on the lowest possible conditions. The simplest thing imaginable is all that is required to be saved. "*Look* unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." What can man ask more than this? What terms more easy, more feasible, more merciful, more just? And what excuse will be rendered in the last day if these terms are rejected, and if the soul shall be lost? Who will be to blame for the destruction of the soul? Who, if eternal ruin is brought down on our heads, and we sink down to woe? What can man say in the day of judgment, if he will not ask for pardon? Why should he not be lost if he will not do it?

(3.) Finally. I may state in one word the true reason which operates on many minds to prevent their being Christians. A nobleman of the East, rich and honored at a magnificent court, was affected with the leprosy. He heard, by a servant girl, of a celebrated prophet. He went to him. "Go," said the man of God, "and wash seven times in Jordan, and thou shalt be healed. And he turned away in a rage." "Lo, I thought," said he, "he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of *JEHOVAH* his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" 2 Kings v. 11, 12. To man, proud even in the deep leprosy of sin, God also sends a message of mercy. 'Go,' is his language, 'to the man of Nazareth. Go to the cross. Go, without money and without price; go, poor, and weary, and heavy laden, and penitent. Go not on a pilgrimage; go not with pomp and parade; go not with your gold and your honors; go not depending on your rank, or your deeds of righteousness; go with the beggar and the slave. Go, and lie down beneath the cross with the most degraded of the human race, a lost, wretched, ruined, leprous man; go, and receive life as the mere gift of God,

and render to the bleeding victim on the tree all the praise of your redemption.' And O when this is said, in how many hearts does the spirit of the proud yet leprous Assyrian rise; and the lip curls with scorn, and the brow is knit with anger, and the sinner turns away in a rage. 'Am I thus to be saved?' is the language of his heart. 'Rather let me die.' And he dies—and sinks to wo, because it was *too easy to be saved!*

## SERMON XI.

### THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH A PROFESSION OF RELIGION SHOULD BE MADE. NO. I.

II. Cor. vi. 17. 18. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

THIS passage of Scripture is an address to Christians, and states the principles on which they should act in reference to the world. It demands a separation from the world; and it contains the assurance that if such a separation exists, God will be their father, and that they shall sustain to him the relation of adopted children.

My wish, at this time, is, not however to apply it to Christians in general, but to the first public act of a Christian's life—the act of making a profession of religion. That, emphatically, is an act of coming out from the world; an act of separating ourselves from others; an act by which we express our purpose not to “touch the unclean thing”; an act by which we publicly declare our purpose to live as becomes “sons or daughters of the Lord Almighty.” The doctrine which it will be the main object of this discourse to defend, is, that a profession of religion implies a separation from the world, and a purpose to lead a life of holiness; and my aim will be to derive from the New Testament the *principles* on which such a profession should be made.

It is the duty of every man to make a profession of religion. It would be easy to make this apparent if it were necessary to the design of this discourse. Nothing can be more evident than that every man should profess to be the friend of the one only God who made him, and of the Redeemer who died to save him. But this obligation to profess religion supposes a previous obligation to embrace it, and to become a sincere Christian. It supposes that



there should be certain qualifications in order that it may be done in a manner that will be acceptable to God.

The importance of just views on this subject will be apparent from two considerations. One is, that a profession of religion is one of the most important steps in a man's life. Its vows are sacred ; its results such as must deeply affect his destiny. Henceforward he will be recognised as a professed friend of God, and stand before the world as a public witness of the truth and a candidate for immortal glory. A part of the obligation of evincing the nature of true religion, and of defending and extending it, will rest on him ; and to him the world will look as an example of what religion is designed to be. The other consideration showing the importance of just views in making a profession of religion, is, that his whole Christian character and usefulness will probably depend on the feelings with which he enters the church. It is undoubtedly a fact, that of those who become professing Christians, scarce one in five contributes much to its real strength. Some have very limited means of usefulness. Some are scarcely fitted, either from want of talent or education, to do good at all except in the very narrowest circles. But of those who do not labor under these disqualifications, the number of those who are the bone and sinew of the church ; who are the bold and unflinching advocates of the truth ; who sustain the prayer meetings and the institutions of benevolence ; who can be depended on when a tide of worldliness and vanity comes in upon the church ; who labor with a zeal that never tires, and an ardor that never cools to save souls from death, is comparatively very few. Part are zealous for a time, and then their zeal dies away like "the morning cloud and the early dew." Part are characteristically indolent, and bring no active energy to the cause of Christianity. Part become soon conformed to the world, and are better known there than in the church. Part become immersed in political strifes, and their influence as Christians expires of course. Part become rich, and are introduced into new circles of life, and their first attachment to the church becomes chilled and cold. Part form new connections in life, and their ardor languishes, and they thus show that whatever there might have been

of zeal at any time was the result of circumstances rather than of principle. Part take their complexion in religion like the chameleon, from the objects and associates around them—are zealous when they are zealous; benevolent when they are benevolent; lukewarm when they are lukewarm; and worldly when they are conformed to the world. A large portion, we have reason to apprehend, have very slight views of the PRINCIPLES involved in the organization of the church; and some are strangers to religion altogether.

So deeply impressed was the Saviour with considerations like these, that with great solemnity he at one time asked the question, “when the son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?” Luke xviii. 8. Should he come now, what measure of faith in his promises, in his truth, in his religion, in his laws would he find? I desire this day to stand before you, and apprise you of what is involved in making a profession of religion; and while I would offer every encouragement to the humble and the contrite to come, it is also a duty from which you would not desire me to swerve to lay down the principles on which the New Testament requires that a profession of religion should be made, without any departure from their high import. To that I now proceed.

I. There should be true conversion to God. In other words, he who makes a profession of religion should be a sincere Christian. He should not merely be a serious minded man; a sober, moral, amiable man; or a man speculatively holding the truth, but he should be a *renewed* man. He should not merely be an awakened or convicted sinner; he should not merely be anxious *to be* a Christian, but he should be in fact a true Christian. He should not enter the church with a desire *to be* converted at the communion, or at any future time, but he should be in fact already converted. He should not enter the church expecting to be in some mysterious way there prepared for heaven, but having evidence that he is now prepared for heaven, and that if he should die before he had an opportunity to partake of the communion, imperfect as he may feel that he is, he would be admitted to glory.

I am thus particular in stating this point because of its

great importance, and because it is vital to all the views which I shall yet state. The church of Christ is a church *of true converts*, not of those *to be converted*. It is designed to be an assemblage of real Christians; and not of those who, for various reasons, may desire to become Christians.

You will appreciate the importance of this remark when you reflect on the inducements which exist to enter the church without any evidence of piety. One of the prevalent errors of these times, unless I am mistaken, in all churches, is the desire for *numbers* rather than for piety; the wish to swell the catalogue of church members rather than to augment the solid piety and the real strength of the household of faith. To this there are often a great many temptations; and there is reason to apprehend that not a few are persuaded to make a profession of religion who are altogether strangers to its nature. There is the love of numbers itself—the desire of recording accessions at every communion—a desire right in itself if intended to glorify Christianity, but which also may be mere selfishness and vanity. In all associations of men, civil, political, literary, and religious, there is to be found the operation of this principle—the mere desire of numerical strength, rather than the strength which is derived from principle, and from solid worth. There is often, also, the vanity of a minister of religion desiring public evidence of success arising from the fact that many join his communion, and leading him to persuade them to connect themselves with the church even when they give most slender evidence of qualification, or it may be, no evidence at all. There is also the anxiety of friends. A Christian parent feels a deep anxiety for his children, and urges them to connect themselves with the church; a husband feels an earnest solicitude for a wife, or a wife for a husband; a sister for a brother, or a friend for a friend, and there is a feeling operating very secretly and very subtilly that if they are in the church they are safe. It is needless to add that many may enter the church under the influence of strong temporary feeling, self-deluded, or with a vague kind of expectation that they may somehow be converted *in* the church.

There are not many men who are intentionally hypo-



crites either in the church or in the world. That there may have been some in the church, none can doubt; and that there are some such men in all associations, no one has any reason to disbelieve. Wherever an object is to be gained of sufficient value in the view of men to overcome their sense of honesty and of truth, men will play the hypocrite; and thus sometimes, but rarely, they enter the church; and thus too they attach themselves to a political party, or make professions of honesty to which they know they are strangers.

But that there are those in the church who are strangers to religion no one can doubt who remembers that there was a Judas among the Apostles; an Ananias, and Sapphira, a Simon Magus, and a Demas among the early disciples; who remembers the parable of the tares of the field; who remembers the declaration of Paul, "Many walk of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christianity;" who remembers the epistle which the Saviour directed to be sent to the seven churches of Asia; or who looks into *any* Christian church of any denomination, and sees how little many professed Christians, even in external form, exemplify the religion of the Redeemer.

My position is, that no one should enter the Christian church who is not a sincere Christian; a converted man; a sinner born again; in other words, who has not evidence of personal piety which will not only bear the test of an examination before the pastor and officers of the church, but before the Master himself, and at the judgment seat of God. No one should enter the church who would not enter heaven should he die; no one who is not as certainly prepared to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the realms of glory, as he is to sit down with his friends at the table of communion.

My proof of this position is, in few words, this: (1.) It is implied in the very nature of a profession. What is a profession? It is a profession of something—of what? Is it not profession of love to God; of dependence on Jesus Christ; of attachment to the Redeemer and his cause; of a purpose to lead a Christian life? And where this exists, does it not constitute religion? It is a confession of sin;



an acknowledgment of guilt, and folly, and former errors and crimes; and is not this a part of religion? It is a profession of the truth of the Bible, and of a purpose to live according to its requirements; and is not this a part of religion? It is not a profession of a purpose *to be* a Christian at some future time; it is a public recognition of those feelings and doctrines which constitute religion itself. A man professes to be a moral man. What is the meaning of this? Is it that, though now immoral, he *means* to become moral hereafter? He professes to be a patriot. Is the sense of this that he designs to *become* a friend of his country at some future time? No. This is not his meaning. But it is that he is *now* a moral man, and a lover of his country. So when a man professes religion, it is a public and solemn declaration that, according to the best of his knowledge and belief, he *has* religion, that he *is* born again, and *has* truly repented of his sins. Such is the obvious interpretation of the act; so it is understood by the world. It is a public declaration made over the slain body and shed blood of Jesus Christ, that according to the most candid and prayerful view which he can take of the subject he is a true Christian, and wishes to be recognised as such. So the world interprets it; so the Bible; so God. (2.) The Bible so speaks of it. Christ every where speaks of a profession of religion as confessing *him* before men. "Whosoever shall confess ME before men, him will I also confess before my Father in heaven." Matth. x. 32. Luke xii. 8. But to confess Christ is to confess him as a Saviour, a Redeemer; an example;—to profess a purpose to be saved by him, to follow him, to obey him. (3.) Again. The Lord's Supper is not designed or adapted to be a converting ordinance. A man sits down at the table of communion. What is the design of it? Is it that he may be converted? Was Judas converted at that table? This is not its design. It is solely to *commemorate* what Christ has done, and to bring impressively before the mind the great events of his death. "Do this *in remembrance* of me," is the command; and this implies that there is already such an attachment to him as to make such a commemoration proper. Do we institute memorials for the purpose of *creating* an attachment to those whom we despise, or hate? Is not the very object of a memento to

recall the image of one whom we love ; to deepen attachment, to bind us more strongly to him or to his memory. The ring which we wear on the finger, or the hair of a friend that we preserve in a locket, is not to *create* love for that friend, but it is to bring it to remembrance and to perpetuate it. (4.) I advert to one other consideration which can never be urged too frequently. It is that few or none are ever converted who enter the church. This fact is one that is familiar to all who ever made any observation ; and the philosophy of the fact is as apparent as the fact itself. A deceived person once in the church feels that he is safe. Preaching adapted to convert the impenitent he never applies to himself, for he is a member of the church, and he wards off all these appeals.—No one can go to him in private and address him personally as an impenitent man, for he would resist it as an affront. And there is another fact as undeniable as it is remarkable. It is, that appeals made in the sanctuary, and designed for him never reach him. Cautions and entreaties on the subject of self-deception ; tender expositions designed for him, pass by him unheeded. Some humble, pious, timid, praying, conscientious Christian shall apply all these appeals to himself, and be deeply distressed, while the cold, and formal, and deceived professor shall perhaps be asleep in the sanctuary, or shall deem it strange that the pastor can be so uncharitable as to suppose that any members of his flock can be practising deception on themselves or their fellow-men.

II. The second principle on which a profession of religion should be made is, that there should be in fact, as there is in form, *a separation from the world*. This is the very command of the text. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.” The word “them” in the text—come out from among *them*—refers to the persons mentioned in the context—to the worshippers of idols, to the impure, to unbelievers. No one can doubt that the meaning of Paul is, that Christians should regard themselves as a peculiar people ; and that a distinct and definite line should be drawn between them and their fellow-men. It would be easy to multiply texts of Scripture to almost any extent

inculcating the same idea. The following passages will set before you the current strain of the Scripture doctrine on this subject. "Be not conformed to this world." Romans xii. 2. "Love not the world, neither things that are in the world. If any man love the world, *the love of the Father is not in him.* For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1. John ii. 16. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." 1. Pet. ii. 9. "My kingdom," said the Redeemer, "is not of this world."

Now the only hope of restoring these solemn commands of Jesus Christ to their place in the church is by addressing them, even perhaps with painful reiteration, to those who are about to make a profession of religion. There are worldly habits in the church itself as it is every where constituted, which it is perhaps impossible to eradicate. There are modes of living, styles of dress and of amusement, and schemes of gain and ambition, whose opposition to the spirit of the gospel does not strike us with amazement *only* because they are common. But we may stand at the portals of the church and remind those who are about to enter, of what the gospel requires at their hands. And despite of all that you may now see in the church, I lay it down as one principle that is to guide you, that you are not to be "conformed to this world." Neither in spirit, in opinion, in aim, in purpose, in amusement, in object, in desire, in your manner of life are you to be conformed to this world. You are to feel that you belong to a different community, are under different laws, and have different objects. You are, in all things to take upon yourself the laws of Jesus Christ; and if in all honesty you are not prepared for this, you are not prepared to make a profession of religion.

To understand this, it may be proper to make a few other remarks. The grand principle in the Bible is, that on earth there are two great communities which are separate in their organization, their purpose, and their design. There is the community of the Christian church, embracing all of every name and land who are under the laws of Christianity; and there is that great community which in the Bible is called "the world." The latter has



its own laws, and purposes; and so has the former. Though mingled together in the same nation, neighborhood, or family, yet they are radically distinct. Now the act of making a profession of religion is, in fact, a coming out from one, and becoming identified with the other of these independent and separate communities. From this primary principle another follows, that there are different laws, purposes, and objects in these two entirely dissimilar kingdoms. The peculiarity of the one is, that it is governed by the laws of God as revealed in the Bible, and as sanctioned and enforced by conscience; and of the other, that it is governed by the laws of honor, though they lead to cold-blooded and deliberate murder; of fashion—though frivolous and foolish, and attended with the loss of the soul; of expediency or of pleasure; of such laws as shall, in their apprehension, be best fitted to promote the ends they have in view—ostentation, ambition, honor, or wealth. And another principle follows from this, that the *world* as such has no right to *cross the line*, and to give law to the members of the church. They are under the laws of the Bible; and all which cannot be defended by that is wrong.

Now what I have to say is, that you are by no means prepared to connect yourself with the church, unless you are ready, effectually and finally, to bid adieu to the community of the world as your portion, and to bring yourself *WHOLLY* under the laws of the Bible. If there is a purpose to blend the two together; if there is an expectation to be as gay and fashionable as the world; if there is a desire for its pleasures; if there is an intention to shape your course by its maxims and its laws; if you are not prepared to abandon, and to feel, that though you are *in* the world yet you are not "*of* the world," then you are by no means prepared to make a profession of religion. You would do more injury in the church than you would do good; and your name had better be where your heart and your influence are.

These are simple principles, and if applied they would guide you aright. It would be too long to attempt to carry them out; and it is not necessary to do it. The principles which should regulate our intercourse with the world are very simple, and they may be expressed in few



words. I will just suggest them. (1.) You are not to partake of the sins of the world. This is clear, and needs no proof. All that is positively evil, and only evil, and that continually, is to be avoided by a Christian. Every thing which is a sinful waste of time, money, influence, strength, is to be avoided. What wide desolation would this simple principle make even in the practice of the members of the church! (2.) You are not to partake of the *amusements* of the world *as such*. I mean that you are not to *originate* such amusements; you are not to *countenance* them; you are not to *partake* of them. You are to go to no place where you will be expected to lay aside your Christian character. Now let it be remembered that over parties of pleasure, and over balls, and over all similar amusements, the *world* has the control. The world gives laws. The world dictates the conversation. The world prescribes the dress, the hours, the expenses, the manner of conversation. Such places the Christian cannot control; and when he goes there he is expected for the time to lay aside the severity of his profession, and to conform to the world. Such scenes are not arranged in accordance with the New Testament; the New Testament is not allowed to reign there. And it becomes a plain and obvious principle, that where a professed Christian *cannot* act out his religion; where he is expected to lay aside his Christian character for the time being; where he cannot without a violation of the rules of the association, or the company, introduce his own principles, and dwell, if he chooses, on the great wonders of redemption, his place is not there. (3.) There *are* great matters of entire innocence and propriety in which the Christian can act in common with this world—and his field of intercourse with them is there. Thus there are the common interests of justice; of learning; of agriculture; of civil matters; of public improvements; of a neighbourhood; of a nation;—his rights as a citizen and as a man, in all which he is called on to act in connexion with the people of the world. Yet in none of these instances is he to act in any way inconsistent with the principles of the most rigid Christian morality; and even in these things, whatever may be the aim

of others, *his* aim is to promote the honor of God the Saviour.

(4.) We are to associate with the people of this world so far as we can do them good. So the Saviour associated with the Scribes and Pharisees; with the Sadducees and the Publicans, and with sinners. So on the Sabbath he went to dine with a Pharisee; and so he entered the house of Zaccheus the Publican to bring salvation to him and his family. To all men we are to do good; and to this end we are not to avoid them, or to say to them "stand by thyself for I am holier than thou;" nor are we to be morose, sour, or misanthropic; but to all we are to evince kindness and benevolence, and to every man we are to do all the good that God may put in our power.

Such are some of the principles which are to regulate our intercourse with this world. Such the principles, I apprehend, on which, if you come aright, you will come into the church. And if these are *not* your principles, then it is apparent that your heart is with the world, and with your present feelings you should not make a profession of religion.

III. A third principle is, that you are to abandon whatever is inconsistent with the honest purpose to be a whole-hearted Christian. As all hope of being understood here arises from the particularity with which my statements are made, I shall specify a few particulars showing what I mean. The general principle I trust will not be called in question, that a man who comes into the church is to abandon whatever is wrong. Assuming this as indisputable, I observe more particularly, that you are to abandon or surrender,

(1.) The supreme love of property or money. "Whosoever he be of you," said the Master, "that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 33. "Ye cannot," said he, "serve God and mammon." "Covetousness," says Paul, "is idolatry;" and an idolator has no inheritance in the kingdom of God.—The early disciples were required by the Redeemer to forsake all that they had and to follow him; and the early Christians did in fact give up all that they had, and devoted all to the Son of God. Whatever Paul had

of property, or learning, or talent that was valuable, he was ready to surrender it all to the cause of the Redeemer. (Phil. iii. 7. 8.) "Yea, doubtless," said he, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." God now requires all who come into the church *as* honestly to consecrate all that they have to him, and in reference to their property as well as their aims, and influence, and talent, to say as Saul of Tarsus did, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" And if you are not prepared to devote your property honestly to God, to be sunk in the ocean, or swept away by the flame if he pleases; if you are not prepared to impart of it to do good and benefit man; if it is not to be your great aim in regard to that to do just what God requires, you are not prepared to make a profession of religion.

(2.) You must be prepared to abandon an evil course of life. This is evident. What I wish to say is, that not only gross vices are to be given up, but all forms of evil. Habits of gross evil, I know, are easily forsaken. But all that is false and evil is to be forsaken also. Profaneness is not only to be forsaken, but falsehood and deception are to be forsaken. The Christian is to be a man of strict uncompromising truth and honesty, no matter what the world is. If the people of the world choose to deceive in the prices or qualities of articles of trade; if they do not deem it necessary always to adhere to their promises; if they choose to say they are not at home when they are at home, still the Christian is to be like Jesus Christ, and is to say, or instruct others to say only what *he* would. And unless you come into the church prepared to be a man of uncompromising truth and integrity, you are not prepared to make a profession of religion. No matter what raptures you may have, or what zeal, or what spirit of prayer, or what joy, the Christian is to be an honest man, and if he is not an honest man all his supposed evidences of piety, are hay and stubble.

(3.) You are to abandon your evil companions. If hitherto your chosen friends have been infidels or scoffers; if they have been the pleasure-loving and the gay; if they

have been found among the patrons of the drama or the ball-room, as companions they are now to be forsaken, and you are to seek and find your associates among the disciples of the Lord Jesus. You are to come and say to each Christian brother, "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried." Ruth i. 16. 17. You are to breathe out the prayer of the Psalmist. "Remember me O Lord with the favor which thou bearest unto thy people." Ps. cvi. 4. You are to regard the Christian brotherhood as your chosen companionship, and to have fellowship with the friends of your days of sin, only in the necessary intercourse of relationship, of business, or to do them good. If this subjects you to their hatred or their scorn, it is to be borne, and if you cannot bear it, it proves that you have no true love to the Redeemer and his cause. With the friends of Christ, if a Christian, you will dwell forever in a world where there is no revelry, no worldly pleasure; and if on earth you decidedly prefer the society of the worldly and the gay to that of the humble friends of Christ, it shows where the *heart* is still, and demonstrates that it is not with Christ. How is he to be prepared for the society of heaven who has no love for the fellowship of Christians on earth; who prefers a ball-room to a prayer meeting, and the conversation of the gay and the frivolous, or even the scientific and the literary, to conversation about the glory of Christianity and the enjoyment of heaven?

(4.) You should come prepared to give up even your kindred, and forsake them for Christ. On this point the Saviour was probably more explicit than on almost any other requirement of his religion. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26. "He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Matth. x. 37. On one occasion he commanded a man to follow him. "Suffer me first," said he, "to go and bury my father." "Let the dead bury the dead," was the firm reply of the Redeemer, "but go



thou and preach the kingdom of God." Luke ix. 59. 60. He demanded the strong proof which would thus be shown that he preferred him to his own friends, and that he was willing to break away from them even in the most tender and interesting circumstances, and to go where he required him. And the same principle is demanded now. If a profession of religion requires you to differ in opinion from father, or mother, or kindred, it should be done. If it requires you to break away from their pleasures; to cease to accompany them to the places of sin, you are to be willing to make the sacrifice, and to separate yourself unto God. If it shall demand of you to forsake your country and home, and to go to the ends of the earth to make him known, you are to come with that feeling. No one should enter the Christian church who would not be willing, if it were clearly shown to him to be his duty, to cross oceans to proclaim the Saviour's name, and to abandon forever all the comforts of his fire-side and his home. This Christ demanded of the Apostles; and this he demands in every professor of religion. For if this feeling does not exist, how can there be a supreme regard to the will of Christ?

(5.) Allied to this, you should be willing to abandon any calling, however honorable and lucrative it may be, for any other calling where you can do more good.—When Saul of Tarsus was converted, he was required to give up his plans of life and become a minister of the cross. And he did it without a murmur. So it must be in all other cases. No man comes into the church with a proper spirit who is not prepared to abandon any calling if Christ requires it, and if he can do more good in a new profession. It is not enough to say that his present calling is not unlawful, and that he may be useful in that. All that may be. But the grand question is, whether *in* that he can do more to honor Christ and save the world than in another. Remember one fact. God often converts young lawyers, and merchants, and farmers, and physicians, and mechanics, *for the very purpose* of making them ministers of the gospel—as he did Saul of Tarsus; and he expects them to fulfil his design as Saul did, by becoming heralds of salva-

tion to a dying world. If he is not prepared to do just what in all honesty he believes Jesus Christ requires of him, he is not prepared to make a profession of religion.

(6.) One remark more under this head. If you are not willing to abandon any calling however lucrative it may be that is contrary to the Bible and to good morals, you should not dare to enter the church. If a man is converted as Paul was, pursuing an evil manner of life, though on the high road to honor and perhaps to wealth, and is not willing to abandon his course, he is not prepared to make a profession of religion. What sort of a professor of religion would Paul have been, if he had not been willing to give up the *business* of persecution? If a man is converted who is a slaveholder, as John Newton was, he should be prepared to give up the business, or he should not be allowed to make a profession of religion. Thus far all is clear. How is it now, under the operation of this principle, with the man who is engaged in the manufacture and sale of ardent spirits? In ancient Ephesus there were men who practised curious arts, and were devoted to it as a business. Under the preaching of Paul they were converted; and one of the first promptings of their Christian zeal was to bring together those books, and burn them before all men to the amount in value of "fifty thousand pieces of silver"—making the expression of their abhorrence at their former life as public as their life and business had been. There was manifested the great principle for which I contend—that no man should connect himself with a church, who is not prepared, at any sacrifice, as they were, to abandon any business, however lucrative, which is evil, and only evil, and that continually. How can a man be a Christian who is not prepared to make such a sacrifice? And why should he seek a connexion with a church to pursue his course of life under the sanction of the Christian name? No. The church needs not such members; and the Saviour never designed that any should profess his name who were not prepared forever to forsake all forms of evil however lucrative, and however honorable in the esteem of the world. No man can be a Christian who

pursues a calling which cannot be pursued from a sincere desire to glorify God; and no man should enter the church who is not prepared to sacrifice his profession, and his calling if it be a scandal and a disgrace to the Christian name.

## SERMON XII.

### THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH A PROFESSION OF RELIGION SHOULD BE MADE. NO. 2.

2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

IN the previous discourse I stated some of the principles on which a profession of religion should be made.

I propose now to resume the subject, and to state some other principles which should direct us in the performance of this duty.

IV. The fourth principle is, that we should come into the church with a fixed and settled purpose to do our whole duty as it may be made known to us by God. I mean by this, that we should not flinch from any duty, however arduous; we should not shrink back from it because it will demand personal sacrifice, or because it will bring upon us the scorn or the opposition of the world, or because it may be attended with pecuniary loss, or because it may expose us to a martyr's death.

It is scarcely necessary to attempt to prove that this is involved in the purpose to make a profession of religion. What is religion? It is doing the will of God. And he who professes religion, professes his solemn purpose to do the will of God, and not his own. When Saul of Tarsus was converted, one of the first questions which he asked was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. The governing purpose of his soul was changed, and it became henceforth a characteristic of the man that he engaged unceasingly in doing the will of God. And how is it possible that a man can be a Christian who does not? Can he be a Christian who enters the church intending to do his duty or not, as he pleases; resolving to be guided by caprice, or fashion, or self-indulgence, or ambition, or pleasure, rather than by the solemn convictions



of duty? Can a man be a Christian who has no settled conviction of what is right and what is wrong; who makes no distinction between truth and falsehood; who has no such views of God's government as to lead him to submit to him? Is such a man prepared publicly to profess that he is influenced by a supreme regard to the will of God? To ask these questions is to answer them. There can be no two ways of *thinking* about them, however many ways there may be of acting.

Instead, therefore, of attempting to demonstrate what will be conceded by all, I shall assume that a man who enters the church not intending to do his whole duty, has no right views of the nature of the Christian profession. And assuming this, I shall proceed to specify some of the acknowledged duties which will be incumbent on him.

One is, to repair, as far as possible, the evils of his former life. Many of those evils, indeed, cannot now be repaired. If a man has been a blasphemer, and a contemner of the divine commands, he can make no reparation to God. His only course in respect to these sins is to humble himself in dust and ashes, and seek for pardon through the blood of the Redeemer. In like manner for many of the evils which he has done to men, he can now make no reparation. The parent whom he disobeyed when a child may be dead, and he cannot now ask his forgiveness, or repay the disregarded and abused kindness of the father or the mother. The neighbor whom he slandered, or whose property he took away by fraud, may be dead also. The man who was killed by the intoxicating liquor which he sold may be dead, and his children, impoverished and degraded, may be so far ruined in their character, that he cannot repair the evils which he has done them. For these, and all similar offences, he can only humble himself before God, and resolve, by a different life, to repair as far as possible the evils done to the community at large. The individuals may be beyond your reach, but an injured community is not, and is as much to be benefitted by your active life in holiness, as it has been injured by your active life of sin. But there are other cases. The man whom you may have corrupted by your infidelity, blasphemy, or

sensuality, may live, and you may be the means of reclaiming him. The man whom you may have slandered may still live, and to him you may make penitent confession of your error. The man that you defrauded may be alive, and you are bound to restore, with penitent acknowledgments, that of which you deprived him. You failed in business. You made an assignment. You compounded with your creditors; and they released you, and the law released you. But you are now in circumstances of comfort or affluence—able to pay all. Will your conscience be released because the law released you? Are you free from moral obligation to pay what you owe, because the law has cancelled the legal obligation? You had their property. You used it. It was by no fault of theirs that it was lost—and they, one and all, suffered by it. You have the means of restoring it. What will good faith require of a man thus circumstanced? And why shall not he who has now the power restore all, so that he may feel that in conscience and in law he owes no man any thing? At a period of life when men usually begin to look for relaxation and ease, Sir Walter Scott failed, and was burdened with a debt of nearly half a million of dollars. To pay it he had nothing but his pen. How many men—professors of religion, too, I fear—would have sat down in despair. Not so he. He refused even the aid of his friends. ‘This right hand,’ said he, ‘shall pay it’—and night and day he toiled till mind and body, crushed together, sunk under the noble effort to pay every man that he owed. What an example to men bearing the Christian name, who, in the unavoidable transactions of business, are unable to pay their creditors! What a reproach to him who can continue to live in affluence unconcerned, and who feels that all is done where the law has pronounced him discharged!

Again. In the purpose to do his whole duty will be involved the purpose to lead a life of prayer. I refer now to secret prayer. Most persons when they are about to make a profession of religion, practice secret prayer. If their minds are deeply impressed, and they feel that they are sinners, they pray of course. And even if they practice a deception on others or on themselves, there is such an obvious impropriety in making a

profession of religion without any prayer, that they then, if at no other time, call upon God. But at the same time it is easy to conceive that this may be regarded as an extraordinary duty, and that they have no serious intention to continue to practice it to any considerable extent after they shall have been admitted to the church. Now, my remark is, that if there is any such secret purpose, a profession of religion should not be made, for it is clear that a man who does not in good faith practice secret prayer, cannot be a pious man. "When thou prayest," said the Saviour, "enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." Matth. vi. 6. "Pray without ceasing," "in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God," are among the most positive commands of the Bible. It would be easy to demonstrate that this is a duty. But this is not my design. My remark is, that a man who comes into the church not prepared to take from his worldly business as much time every day as shall be necessary, with a good conscience to keep up the life of religion in the heart; to meet the temptations to which he is exposed, and to walk with God, cannot be a pious man, and should not approach the Lord's supper. Unless he loves his closet; unless he prefers it to any place of amusement, of business, or of gain; any pursuit of science, literature, or ambition, he may have much that is amiable, and kind, and fascinating, but he has no evidence that he is a pious man. For evidence of piety will be better found in the persevering practice of secret devotion, than in the most noisy profession, and in the most public proclamation of a purpose to serve God.

The same thing is true of those whose duty would lead them to the practice of family prayer. The general principle is, that a man should honestly intend to discharge his whole duty. My remark now is, that if he is not prepared to summon his family around him, and worship God by leading them to the throne of grace, he is not prepared to make a profession of religion. It would be too long to go into a proof on this point now. A remark or two must suffice. What will be your influence in your family if this is not done? The truth is, that

there is such an instinctive sense of the propriety of family devotion in every household, that where this is not done, all other influence of a religious kind is neutralized. A child knows that a father who professes to be a Christian *should* worship God in his own dwelling. To him it is inexplicable that he does not do it. He learns, you can hardly tell how, that those who are sincere and eminent Christians, *do* offer the morning and evening sacrifice to God. And he has no way of accounting for the fact that *you* do not do it except on the supposition that you have less religion—a supposition that approximates very rapidly to the conclusion that you have none. And what man can expect the divine blessing on his family; who can expect peace in his own bosom, who is living in the habitual and constant neglect of a known duty? How can a man come and partake of the emblems of a Saviour's body, who at the very time knows that he is daily neglecting a positive requirement of God, and who is resolving to persevere in the neglect?

Again. The purpose to do our whole duty will extend to all the relations of life. It will extend to the intention to be a Christian, and to act like a Christian, wherever, in the providence of God, we may be placed. Whether in the relation of parent or child; of husband or wife; of brother or sister; of master or servant; of employer or apprentice, or clerk, in all these relations there will be the solemn and fixed purpose to do our whole duty, and to adorn religion there. In any situation in which we may be placed, there will be the design to live and act as the Saviour did. And if there is an intention to lay aside the severer restraints of religion; to mingle in scenes of gaiety and vanity that are contrary to the most strict obligations of Christianity; to go away from the sanctuary and to be as gay, as volatile, as ambitious, and as fond of dress and amusement as the people of the world are, the case is clear, whatever else you may do, you should never approach the table of communion.

V. A fifth general principle is, that we are to come resolving that we will be as eminent Christians as possible, or that we will make as much of our religion as we possibly can make of it. My meaning is, that we should "make full proof" of the power of the gospel to sanc-



tify the soul ; that we should not come intending merely to be a member of the church ; nor merely to reach heaven, but intending that whatever there is of purifying power, whatever there is of consolation, whatever there is of the fulness of hope in the gospel should be ours. One of the resolutions of President Edward's, adopted in early life, was in these words : " On the supposition that there never was but one individual in the world, at any time, who was properly a complete Christian in all respects of a right stamp, having Christianity always shining in its true lustre, and appearing excellent and lovely, from whatever part and under whatever character viewed : *Resolved*, to act just as I would do, if I strove with all my might to be that one who should live in my time." Nor do I see how any one can be prepared to make a profession of religion who does not adopt substantially that resolution. No commands of the New Testament are more positive than those which require us not only to aim at perfection, but to be perfect. " Be ye, therefore, perfect," said the Saviour, " as your Father in heaven is perfect." Matth. v. 48. " As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." 1 Pet. i. 15. The idea is that he who makes a profession of religion should resolve to be as holy as possible ; to be as dead to the world as possible ; to be as eminent in love to God and in love to man, in prayer, and faith, and humility, and self-denial as he possibly can be.

To dwell on this head in the way of proof, would be useless. I may just add, however, that if a man wishes either comfort or usefulness in the church, he can obtain either only in this way. No man ever arrived at any eminence either in moral character, or in any profession, who had not such a singleness of aim. " If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light ; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." Matth. vi. 22. The reason why there is so little comfort, peace, joy, and usefulness among the professed friends of Christ, is, that they never came into the church with any unity of aim ; or if they did, they soon abandoned it. To be a Christian ; to live a life of piety ; to be holy, was only one of many plans which they formed ;

and one, alas ! which has been often compelled to give way to others. For it often happens, that of all the plans and purposes which professed Christians form, those of their religion are the most flexible and yielding. The laws of fashionable life, at any expense of time, or money, or ease, must be conformed to. The laws which govern them in their attempts to become rich and honored, are to be conformed to. If there is to be any yielding, the laws of their religion are to be made to give way. If any time is taken for any new project, it is time taken from their closets rather than their counting-rooms ; and the devotions of the family are abridged rather than the pleasures of the evening party. If, in the pressure of hard times, there is any curtailment of expenses requisite, the curtailment is made in the matters of benevolence, and the cause of Christ first suffers. Meantime the splendid mansion, and the carriage, and the retinue of servants, and the gay apparel, and the gorgeous furniture are kept as long as they can be ; but the channels of benevolence are dry, and sympathy for the cause of a dying world is suddenly extinguished. With such the least stable of all laws are those of the New Testament ; the most firm are those which control the fashionable and the business world. Now, what I am wishing to say is this : That he who comes into the church intending that in any unexpected emergency the first acts of retrenchment shall be made on his religion ; that his piety shall be perpetually giving way to the laws of fashionable life, of politics, of gain, and of honor ; that all abridgments of time shall be taken from his times of prayer, and of reading the Bible, and of proper religious duty, knows nothing about religion, and should not presume to approach the emblems of a Saviour's death. The only things in this world that are to be stern, inflexible, unchanging, and eternal, are the principles of religion ; and where they are not so regarded, whether in the church or out of it, there is an utter destitution of the principles of true love to the Redeemer. Heaven and earth are to pass away, but the laws of Christ are not to pass away.

VI. A sixth principle which I state on which we should make a profession of religion is, that we should be the warm and decided friends of revivals. I mean

by this, not only that we should be the friends of religion in general, and of its advancement—which every man who makes any pretensions to piety must be—but that we should be the advocates and friends of the extraordinary manifestations of the grace of God when numbers are simultaneously converted to the Saviour. I do not deny that religion is to make advances in the world by other modes than by revivals ; nor do I affirm, by any means, that we are to undervalue any influences, however feeble, that tend to the promotion of true piety on the earth. But this is what I mean. The gospel is fitted to produce a deep and far-spreading simultaneous influence on the minds of men. It is a fact that such an influence often descends from heaven and pervades a community, and that a sense of the importance of religion spreads from heart to heart, and the power of sympathy is excited, and many come simultaneously to the cross. It is a fact that the Saviour promised such blessings, and that on the day of Pentecost the Spirit of God descended with such power, and that thousands were converted. And it is a fact that if this world is ever converted to God ; if this land is saved from infidelity, and Sabbath-breaking, and licentiousness, and profaneness, it must be by such scenes as were witnessed on the day of Pentecost. I have no other hope of the prevalence and extension of religion and purity on earth than by revivals of religion. Of this age they have been the glory ; striking deeper and farther onward into all that is valuable in our prospects for the future, than any or than all other means that have been adopted to bless our country.

Now men enter the church with very various feelings in regard to these manifestations of the grace of God. Some have never witnessed such displays of his mercy, and have no settled opinion in regard to them. Some look on the whole subject with distrust, and have no desire to witness them. Some associate them with scenes of disorder and fanaticism ; regard them as the result of an overheated imagination, and as tending to unsettle all that is fixed and permanent. Some regard them as the sluices of error and extravagance, and deem them to be the mere production of human measures and machinery. The ignorance of many in the church on this subject is



to be pitied rather than to be regarded as a subject of reproach. But the opposition which is often made deserves other language than that which merely describes ignorance. The apathy of the churches in regard to revivals is one of the most melancholy features of the times in which we live.

The position which I wish now to be understood as taking is, that no one should make a profession of religion unless he is prepared to give his prayers, and toils, and honest efforts to a promotion of a pure revival of religion. He is not to come into the church to speak of such scenes as disorder and confusion ; he is not to come to complain of the preaching which the Holy Ghost usually blesses to this end ; he is not to come to take side with the wicked world in characterizing such scenes as that on the day of Pentecost as extravagance and wild-fire ; he is not to come to impede any honest and well-meant effort to promote the salvation of souls. Not for such purposes is he to come into the church of Jesus Christ—for in all churches there are enough such already. We need other men. The churches need other professors of religion. There *must* be other professors of religion—those who will heartily, and prayerfully, and continually seek a revival of the work of God. And if such is your state of mind that you could not in all honesty and heartiness join in the prayer that the church might witness such a scene as that on the day of Pentecost ; if you would be alarmed, or would shrink back at the prospect of the simultaneous conversion of hundreds and thousands in a brief period of time ; if you would call it extravagance and enthusiasm, and join with the wicked and say, “these men are filled with new wine,” then it is manifest that you are not prepared to make a profession of religion. Jesus Christ needs no allies who would deride the work of the day of Pentecost, or that would consider it as a scene of tumult and disorder.

But what I have now said expresses very feebly what I wish to say. It is not merely that you are not to *oppose* such a work, but it is that you would heartily desire it, and pray and labor for it. The sum of what I would say is, that in all our churches we need—we greatly need—those who in the fulness of an overflowing heart can



say, "O Lord, revive thy work, in the midst of the years make known, in wrath remember mercy;" those who for "Zion's sake will not hold their peace, and who for Jerusalem's sake cannot rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Why should a man enter the house of God to impede in any way the work of salvation? And if you are not prepared to stand forth as the advocate of revivals of religion; if you are not prepared to give your influence to promote them; if you are not prepared to sustain a pastor in such preaching and efforts as are adapted to produce them; if you cannot be depended on, should God in his mercy visit his people with the descending blessings of salvation like floods and torrents, then you have not a spirit adopted to the exigency of the times in which you live; you bring not the aid which the church needs in this time of her history."

VII. A seventh principle which I state is, that you should enter the church as a warm and decided friend of any and every proper plan for the salvation of the world. For what did the Redeemer organize the church? What purpose did he contemplate by continuing it as an organized body from age to age? Not for its own ease; not primarily and principally that its members might be prepared for heaven. When converted they are prepared for heaven, and if they should then die, they would be saved; and heaven is a higher place of comfort than the church here, and better fitted to purify the soul than all the advantages which we can here enjoy. The design for which he keeps them here he has stated. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Christ contemplates the conversion of this whole world to himself. There is not a nation or a people which he does not intend to subjugate to his law. The distant tribes of men are to learn his name, and to hear the sound of his gospel; and the instrumentality by which that is to be effected is his church.

Every individual who becomes connected with the church should sympathize with Jesus Christ in his purpose to save the world. He should be *of course* a friend of every feasible plan to extend the influence of religion; he should regard his time, and influence, and wealth, as all the property of God the Saviour, to be employed in

whatever way he shall direct. In all societies he should be prepared to advocate the plans of benevolence ; at all times he should rejoice in the opportunity of befriending every scheme that goes to alleviate human misery, and to elevate man to the favor of God. It should not be forced, constrained, unwilling ; but he should be just as willing to sacrifice his time and property to benefit the world as Jesus Christ was to sacrifice comfort and life to save us. Why should he not be ? He should be just as willing, if need be, to cross oceans amidst privations and wants to benefit the perishing as the apostle Paul was. Why should he not be ?

It needs no great acquaintance with the church to see that all are not so. And it needs but little observation to see the effect when they are not so. When members of the church are more penurious in regard to the objects of Christian benevolence than are the men of the world ; when you can more certainly calculate on a liberal benefaction for the circulation of the Bible and the spread of the gospel from a man who makes no pretension to religion than from a professed Christian ; when a member of the church joins with its foes in finding fault with the plans of Christian benevolence, in exaggerating the errors of those engaged in this work, in throwing obstacles in the way ; when they look with unconcern on the whole enterprize of saving man ; when they have thousands to lavish on their dwellings, their dress, their furniture, their equipage, their children, and nothing to give to that Redeemer who died for men ; or when they can find it in their heart to lavish on a splendid entertainment their wealth without limit or bound and turn away coldly from the pleadings of a perishing world for aid, whatever may be the estimate in which they will be held finally by the Master before whom they must stand or fall, it is impossible not to see the effect which it must have in regard to the salvation of the world. There are devoted men with as complete a right to earthly comforts as we have, who have forsaken all, and who labor amidst many discouragements in heathen lands to bring them to God. And that which their hearts must most deeply feel is, the coldness and indifference with which their enterprize is regarded by many of the professed friends of their common Lord.

Now we need not so much accession of numbers to the churches as those who shall enter heartily into the work of the world's redemption. Nothing is gained to the cause of Christ—as nothing is gained to himself—when a man enrols himself among the professed friends of the Saviour only to be a clog and a burden on the chariot wheels of salvation;—a man doing his duty only when it coincides with his own interest; who habitually neglects secret and family worship; who means to have only religion enough to make him respectable and to take him to heaven; who has no friendship for revivals of religion, and who doubts about them or opposes them; who stands aloof from the plans of Christian benevolence, and who coolly sees a world unpitied going down to hell. Such a man sheds a blight on any church, and on all accounts should retain his connexion with the world. Let him not deceive himself, or attempt to deceive God and his fellow-men, by enrolling his name among the friends of the Redeemer. Other helpers are needed than these. The church *must* have other friends or it will be ruined; the world must have other helpers or it will never be converted to God.

Finally, I would observe that if the remarks which have now been made, and which were made in the previous discourse, are correct, then we have arrived at the conclusion that the profession of religion is much more than a form and a name. To make such a profession is a step not to be entered on without thought, and without a most thorough acquaintance with ourselves. Our principles should be understood. The reasons which prompt us to it should be known. The object at which we aim should be seen. The stand which we take should be decided. And it should be taken with such clear views, and such firm convictions, that we should be able to maintain our position amidst all the frowns, the contempt, and the opposition which we may meet with.

On the ground of these views and principles, we may exhort you to make a profession of religion. If the act were what many seem to suppose; if it imposed no solemn obligations and implied no settled principles in regard to the course of life; if it was merely the change of a name and of external relations; if it were to come into the church and pass the life in spiritual repose and indolence,

then I should feel no interest in exhorting any man to make a profession of religion, and you would feel that it was a matter of no consequence whether it was or was not done. It would be a matter too insignificant to excite any solicitude ; and the whole subject might be dismissed without concern. And one reason, as I apprehend, why so few make a profession, is, that it is felt by them to be a matter of little importance, implying a slight change of purpose, and not connected with any great and important principles. I do not conceal the fact that I hope by the representation which I have made to deter from this act those who would come into the church only to be an incumbrance when there ; but I have also desired to show you that it is an act which demands solemn purpose, and profound thought, and much prayer, and which is *worth* an effort. We need none, we ask none, to come among us who are not prepared to consecrate themselves in the self-denials of a holy life to the Son of God ; none who will not every where and always have the humility, the self-denial, the heavenly-mindedness, the ever burning zeal, the universal benevolence of the Lord Jesus Christ.



## SERMON XIII.

### ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST. NO. I.

Phil. iii. 18. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

ARE we true Christians? is the most important question which can be asked in relation to ourselves. It is a question which may be examined with the utmost attention without danger of injury. True piety, like gold, will bear any test that can be applied, and will be all the brighter and purer for it, and no sincere Christian need be alarmed by any examination of his religion, however rigid or severe. If our religion is not genuine it *should* be examined by the strictest tests, and when believed to be false it should be honestly abandoned.

It is evident that the persons referred to in the text were professors of religion. The term "walk" is commonly used in the New Testament to denote Christian conduct; and the undoubted meaning of the text is, that there were many persons in the church at Philippi—pure and noble as that church was in the main, who professed to be Christians, but who showed by their deportment that they were real enemies of the religion which they professed. The "Cross of Christ" is an emphatic phrase to denote the Christian religion. As the sacrifice on the cross constituted the very essence of Christianity, the term came to denote the Christian religion itself. It is here used, perhaps, also to show more emphatically the apostle's view of the extreme heinousness of the offence, that, while they professed to be *Christians*, they were in fact the enemies of the *very peculiarity* of the Christian religion.

Of the existence of such strangers to religion in the church, Paul had been long aware. Of their character, and of their fearful doom he had told them often. He now again reminded them, with tears, of the melancholy

truth. He used not towards them the language of harsh and angry denunciation. He did not hold them up to public scorn and indignation. He did not attempt to wound their feelings by satire, or to overwhelm them with harsh invective. He was too deeply impressed with their guilt and their danger to do this. He knew that the way to reclaim the deceived and the erring was not to denounce them with harshness, but to entreat them with tears. Kindness accomplishes what severity cannot do,—as, in the fabled strife between the sun and the north wind, the sun with gentle and warming beams removes the cloak which the north wind could not strip away by violence. The language of tenderness will find its way with reforming power to the heart, where the words of harsh rebuke would tend only to irritate and confirm in error. Paul felt also, probably, as every minister of the gospel should, that it little becomes a dying mortal, conscious of many imperfections and much liability to self-deception himself, to use the language of harsh denunciation when speaking to others. Conscious imperfection will speak tenderly of the faults of others, and will weep rather than denounce when there is need of speaking of the errors and dangers of professed Christians.

From the words of the text, the following points of remark are naturally suggested.

I. There is reason to believe that many professors of religion are the real enemies of the cross of Christ.

II. What are the characteristics of that enmity; or how may it be determined that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ? and

III. Why is the fact of their being in the church fitted to produce grief and tears?

I. The first proposition is, that there is reason to believe that many professors of religion are the real enemies of the cross of Christ. The proof on this head might be drawn from what we know of the deceitfulness of the heart; the numerous cautions against deception in the Scriptures; and from the case of Judas among the apostles, and other instances specified in the New Testament. I choose, however, rather to rest the whole proof of this point on the account which the Lord Jesus has himself given of the condition of the church in the two instruc-

tive parables of the tares of the field, and of the net cast into the sea. "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field : but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather ye the wheat into my barn." Matth. xiii. 24—30. "Again: the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire." Matth. xiii. 47—50.

That our Saviour meant to teach in these parables that there would be many who would profess his name who would be strangers to him, there can be no doubt.—The same thing he affirmed in his account of the transactions of the day of judgment. Matth. vii. 21—23: "Not every one that shall call unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I NEVER KNEW YOU."

It is not my purpose to dwell on this part of our subject. I wish simply to place the proof of the fact before our own minds as furnishing a reason for whatever earnestness I may evince in urging the language of the Bible, "Be not deceived." I may just observe, however, in passing, (1.) That Christianity is not responsible for the

hypocrites or self-deceived professors that may be at any time in the bosom of the church. Religion does not produce or countenance hypocrisy. No book more decidedly condemns it than the New Testament; no person ever did it with more severity than the Saviour. The Christian religion should no more be held answerable for hypocrisy, than friendship is for false professions, or the patriotism of Washington, for the treason of Arnold. (2.) The Christian religion does not stand alone in this. There are men who make professions of friendship which are false; men who make professions of patriotism which are false; men who make professions of honesty, temperance, chastity, and honor, which are false, as well as men who profess religion who are false. If our revolution produced a Washington, it produced also an Arnold; and if great and trying times have produced patriots who would shed their blood for their country, they have produced men also who would sell their country for gold. (3.) We claim for Christianity only the good which it has done. We point to the sinners whom it has reformed; to the vicious whom it has reclaimed; to the proud whom it has humbled; to the virtues which it has created and cherished, and to its influence on the morals and the destiny of mankind, as the proof of its power. We claim not for it the "tares" which have been sown in the field. "An enemy hath done this." Patriotism may speak of its achievements, and of the heroic virtues which it has summoned forth and sustained, but it is not to be charged with the crimes which under the name of love of country have aimed a vital stab at liberty. (4.) We ask that, on this subject, the language of discrimination and justice should be used. We have no wish to screen the hypocrite, or to be apologists for deceit. We ask that Christianity should not be held answerable for what it has not contributed to produce and foster. And we especially desire that the facts to which we are now adverting should not be made the occasion of the ruin of the soul. It will be a poor compensation for the loss of the soul to reflect that many were deceived in the church, and, to be able to prove, if you are lost, that your most sanguine calculations of the number of hypocrites was correct, or fell short of the reality. Such a reminiscence in the world



of wo will not constitute even the "single drop of water" that shall be needed to cool the parched tongue. It will be no alleviation to your sorrows or mine, that others were deceived; and to prove that *they* have gone to hell will constitute no passport for *us* to heaven.

II. My second object was to show how we may determine when those who profess religion are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

The great importance of this enquiry, and the necessity of obtaining discriminating views on it, will constitute the apology for all the attention which I shall ask to this head of the discourse.

The modes in which we discern the existence of hostility are the following. (1.) When it is *avowed* and *declared*, as between nations at war, or individuals engaged in contention and strife. (2.) It may be evinced by neglecting to manifest friendship in circumstances fitted to test the character, and to bring out the real principles. In a nation, if all are summoned to its defence, and a part neglect or refuse to come to its aid, their real principles cannot be a matter of doubt. The danger of the nation may be so imminent, that a neglect to *act* is in fact an indication of hostile feelings. (3.) It is evinced by failing to manifest the characteristic spirit of friendship. If we are in distress, and a professed friend *could* aid us, but *will* not; if we are hungry, and he will not feed us; if we are thirsty, and he will not give us drink; if we are naked, and he will not clothe us; if we are sick and in prison, and he will not visit us; if our affairs are in danger of bankruptcy, and he will not help us; if we are dying, and he will not come near us to moisten our parched lips, or to close our eyes in death, we have no doubt about the nature of his professed friendship;—for these are the scenes which determine the reality of affection. (4.) It is evinced where the professed friend is found coinciding in his plans and feelings with those of an enemy; where the course of life he leads is such as to throw no obstacle in the way of our antagonist, but is such as rather to facilitate his plans; and where he refuses to lend his aid to us, to cripple the efforts and to embarrass the movements of the foe. If our professed friends find all our schemes and

movements only embarrass theirs; if we have no sympathy with them, and are always found doubting the wisdom of their plans, and suggesting errors and evils; if we have no plans of our own to propose, but live only to suggest doubt about the expediency of those adopted by them, it proves that our *real* sympathies are not with them, but with their foes. (5.) If we are secretly aiding and abetting an enemy, it shows that we are really in his interest. If we are suggesting the counsels which he would suggest, if we are forming the plans which he would form; if we are throwing embarrassments where he would do it, it shows that we are really advancing his cause. Further. There are often decisive moments—the *crises* of events—where a slight circumstance will determine the scale on one side or the other. If, in those trying times, when every man is expected to be found at his post, we are found in ever so small a matter abetting an enemy, it shows that we are under his influence and control. A word or a single action may often do more to decide the character and determine the real feelings in the crisis of a battle than the conduct of many hours and months in a time of peace. (6.) The character is often *suddenly* developed by some circumstance which shows what it is. Some strong temptation brings out the true feelings of the soul, and shows what is the real object of attachment, while the general course of the life may have been apparently otherwise. Such was the case in the instances of Achan and Judas. In the comparatively monotonous scenes of life, the profession may be uniform and fair, and nothing may occur that shall determine the true feelings of the soul. For it is not the uniformity of the profession that determines character; it is the crisis, the moment of intense interest, the period when all the real principles of the life are rallied and exhibited, that constitutes the true criterion of the character.

Our object is to ascertain how we may determine whether we are the friends or the enemies of the cross of Christ. Applying these obvious principles for determining the characteristics of friendship or enmity, I shall now call your attention to several particulars which may aid us in deciding this momentous question. I observe, then,

(1.) That those are the enemies of the cross of Christ

in the church who have not been born again. The proof of this is brief, but unquestionable. For, "the carnal mind is enmity with God," and men are by nature "dead in trespasses and in sins," and unrenewed men are "the children of the wicked one." There are but two spiritual empires in this world—the kingdom of light, and the kingdom of darkness; the empire over which God rules, and the empire over which Satan is the absolute monarch. They who are not the subjects of the one, are the subjects of the other; and they who have not, by the new birth, been translated out of the "kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son," are still the subjects of the enemy of man. God is building up a kingdom on the earth; and it is done by a change in character, and views, and feelings, the most momentous and thorough that the mind ever undergoes. In the Bible it is designated as "life from the dead," and as a "new creation;" and it is *impossible* that this change should take place and no evidence be furnished of it; or that it should occur and produce no difference in the life. Can the vegetable world again bloom with beauty in the returning spring after the long death of winter, and give no evidence of life? Can the buds open, and the flowers blossom, and the grass carpet the earth, and yet all be as cold and sterile as in the winter? Could the now pale, and stiff, and mouldering corpses under ground leave their graves and come forth, and yet there be no evidence of life? Could the sun rise suddenly at midnight, and shed his beams on the dark world, and there be no evidence of the mighty change? And can a sinner dead in sins be quickened into life by the power of God's Spirit, and still there be no life? Can the powers of the soul, long torpid and chill in the dreary winter of sin, be warmed and animated with the love of God, and no one know it? Can the pure light of the Sun of righteousness pour its beams into the soul darkened by sin, and all be as benighted as ever? Can the slave in sin be set at liberty; can the gospel touch his shackles, and his limbs feel the manly impulse of the freedom of the sons of God, and he continue to feel and act as if he were still a slave? Can the poor maniac be restored to his right mind; the wandering eye of the lunatic become settled and calm,

and no one know it? Can he who has all his life hated eternal and infinite excellence, be brought to love it, and the soul itself be ignorant of the amazing transformation? And can he who has despised the cross, and trampled the blood of the covenant beneath his feet, embrace that cross as the only foundation of his hope of heaven, and yet give so dubious indications of the change that no one shall know it, or suspect it from his conduct?

Herein is the origin of all our leanness. I verily believe that the true source of the coldness and deadness of professing Christians is to be found in low and inadequate views of the nature of conversion to God. We linger at the threshold of life. We have not yet settled the great point whether there is such a thing as regeneration, or whether "there be any Holy Ghost." Multitudes have no correct views of the great change which takes place when the soul is renewed, nor have they any belief of the truth which the Bible reveals on that subject. They speak of *seriousness*, instead of *regeneration*. They talk of being *thoughtful*, instead of being *converted*. They have some indistinct image of an external work, while the Bible describes it as passing from death to life. They seem to suppose that the act of becoming connected with the church is to be attended with a breaking off from some open sins; that they are to take their leave of the grosser forms of iniquity, and that they are, for the time at least, to give themselves to increased seriousness. But do they speak of a mighty, thorough, transforming change, as the Bible does? Have they any sympathy with the description of the new birth in the New Testament? Know they any thing of compunction for sin; of grief that they are poor, and polluted before God; of the joys of pardon; of the new views of the glory and grandeur of the divine character as now seen in the Son of God? Is there a new heart; a new life; a new conversation? Are there new hopes; new joys; new objects of pursuit? Or is there amidst the seriousness some plan for compromising matters with God, and an enquiry even then how the hold on the world may be continued? Is there still a purpose, while the decencies of the Christian profession shall be maintained, to grasp still as much of the world as possible; to pray as little as possible; to be



as gay, and as fashionable, and as happy in the world as may *possibly* consist with the Christian profession? I tremble when I think of a man just entering on the professed Christian life, endeavoring to make a compromise with God, and a league with the world; attempting to make light and darkness, and heaven and hell meet together.

Here, I repeat it, is the source of our difficulties. It consists in low, and unscriptural, and unsatisfactory views of conversion to God. And the influence of those views spreads through all the life, and moulds the character. But the truth of the Scriptures on this point is plain. There is no religion where there has been no conversion; and if in our personal experience we have not known what the Saviour meant by the new birth, our hopes of heaven are built on the sand. If his language on this subject is to us mysticism or fanaticism; if we do not know what is meant by the new creation, and by the life from the dead, and by the love of God shed abroad in the heart, and by the peace that passeth all understanding, I would tell you, even weeping, that we are the enemies of the cross of Christ!

(2.) They are the enemies of the cross of Christ, who are living in the indulgence of any known sin. It was the indulgence of a single sin, and not any general depravity of manners, that determined the character of Achan and of Judas. It needs no argument to show that the man that is seeking my hurt in any way, is my enemy; and that he who is aiding and abetting a foe in the smallest matters, is to be set down as a traitor to his country. It is not in great transactions that the character is best determined. He who gives a foe information of a weak point in a fortress, is as really an enemy to his country as if he were to surrender the garrison; and he who furnishes an enemy with a small boat for his service, is as really a traitor to his country as though it were a ship of the line. It was for this reason that our Saviour said, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee, that thy whole body be not cast into hell." Matth. v. 29, 30. And for this reason David said, "If I regard iniquity *in my heart*, the Lord will not hear me;" and for this reason he exclaimed, "Who can understand

his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." Psal. xix. 12.

It is perfectly manifest, that the man who indulges deliberately in any known sin, is the foe of his Maker. He shows that he disregards his authority, and despises the work of Christ, for he came that he might "cleanse us from *all* iniquity." It matters not what this sin is; nor is it to be supposed that it is the same in all. It may be levity, pride, ambition, envy, malice, backbiting, or covetousness. It may be a purpose of revenge for a real or supposed affront. It may be an unwillingness to confess a fault, and to ask for pardon. It may be a refusal to make restitution for an injury done to a neighbor's person or property. It may be the indulgence of an unholy temper, or an unhallowed filling the mind with images of sensuality and licentiousness. It may be an incessant aspiring after the honors of the world, or a desire for its wealth that is never at ease, and that is never satisfied. It may be a habit of murmuring at the allotments of Providence, and the indulgence of envious feelings that others are more honored, or more prospered than ourselves. It may be attachment to some idol, or inconsolable grief that some object of affection has been removed by the hand of God. Whatever it is, hostility to the cross is evinced by its indulgence; and the man as certainly shows that he is the enemy of Christ, as if he had driven the nails that fastened him to the tree, or plaited for him the crown of thorns. 'I kept the raiment of those that stoned the martyr Stephen,' said Paul; and though he did not throw a stone, he regarded himself as not meet to be an apostle. One of the very elements of Christianity is, that he who does not desire to renounce every thing that is sinful, is the enemy of God.

(3.) Those who are pursuing a doubtful and undecided course of conduct without any effort to know what is right, are the enemies of the cross of Christ. An honest man, a sincere Christian, will be willing to be made acquainted with all his faults. He will not turn away his ear from reproof, but will candidly and prayerfully desire to know what is the will of God. For it is one of the very elements of Christianity, that a man should come to Christ as a little child, and be willing to sit at his feet.

It is an indispensable requisite that he should be desirous of knowing his Lord's will, and of ascertaining what God requires at his hand.

Now, there may be many courses of conduct which to the mind of a professed Christian must be, to say the least, of very doubtful propriety. It must be a serious question, whether they can be reconciled with the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, and with the stern and uncompromising principles of Christianity. Whether, for instance, a certain style of living and expense be such as Christ will approve; whether the indulgence of certain feelings be such as are consistent with Christianity; whether a certain kind of business be such as a Christian should pursue; whether a man's expenditure for personal adorning, or for his family, and his gratification be right; and whether his expenditures for the purpose of doing good and the salvation of the world, are such as are demanded by the gospel of Christ; these and a hundred similar questions must come before the mind of each professor of religion, and *ought* to receive a prompt and intelligent decision.

The position which is now before us is, that a man who will pursue a course of life which is of doubtful propriety, and on which his own mind is not satisfied that it is consistent with Christianity, without any pains to know what is right, is the enemy of the cross of Christ. He gives evidence that he has never learned the very first principles of religion, the principles requiring him to submit his will to the will of God. I refer to such cases as the following. (1.) Where a man has every reason to believe that if he were to examine his course of life by the Bible he would find it to be wrong, and yet continues to pursue it *without* examination, and because he is *unwilling* to be convinced. (2.) Where a man is told by his friends that a certain course of life is evil, and yet is resolved to pursue it without further notice or attention to the inquiry. (3.) Where he becomes angry with a friend that would convince him of the error of his course, or where he assumes an air of indifference or contempt in the sanctuary where such subjects come up for discussion. (4.) Where the subject occupies public attention and discussion, and he will neither read, nor converse, nor pray on it, but is resolved to brave public opinion and the Bible. And (5.)

Where he will not pray, and examine, and make it his *business* to ascertain whether he is, or is not, pursuing a course of life that shall please God. In all these cases, he is evidently an enemy of the cross of Christ; for he evinces just the spirit which the enemies of God do always, and which a true Christian can never. The men of the world pursue their own ways; will not be admonished; will not stop to inquire whether their course is one that pleases God; and become irritated and vexed if God by his Providence or his Spirit so far interferes with their doings, as to call in question the propriety of their conduct. And when professing Christians do the same thing, they show that they have the same spirit, and that they have never been born again. You pursue a course of life, it may be, for which your conscience reproves you, and for which the world reproaches you, and which real Christians think to be wrong, and which you have every reason to think the Bible condemns, and yet you are at no pains to examine it. You continue to pursue it from year to year, and you thus show, that you are an utter stranger to the very elements of that gospel which Paul embraced when he said, "*Lord what wilt thou have me to do?*"

(4.) They are the enemies of the cross of Christ among his professed friends, who manifest in their conduct none of the peculiarities of those who truly love him. There is *something* that constitutes the peculiarity, the essential nature, of the Christian religion. There was *something* which distinguished the Lord Jesus from the mass of men, and which constituted the peculiarity of his character. There is *something*—whatever it may be—which is required in the New Testament as the distinguishing evidence of attachment to the Lord Jesus. There is *something* which is to serve to distinguish Christians from other men, or the religion is worthless. Now, my position is, that, whatever this is, unless *we* possess it, we are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Whatever this is, it is not external morality, for many men of the world are moral men. It is not amiableness of temper, for many of them are amiable and kind. It is not simply honesty and integrity, for many of them are honest. It is something which is to distinguish us from *all* the men of the world, and it



we are destitute of that, our profession is "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbol."

But how, perhaps it may be asked, does it appear that there is to be *any* thing peculiar in the Christian profession? I answer. It is not the nature of religion to be hid. Men do not light a candle to put it under a bushel. I answer further, that the stupendous truths of redemption are not brought to bear upon the human soul that it might be just what it was before. Did Christ die that his followers might be just like other men? Was his precious blood shed on Calvary that his followers might be undistinguished in the mighty mass of sinners? Did the Son of God toil and bleed that the kingdom which he reared might be just like all other kingdoms? Did the apostles labor, and suffer, and die as martyrs that they might leave the world as they found it? And does the Holy Ghost effect the mighty change of the new creation in the soul, that the man might be just what he was before? And are the solemn truths pertaining to God's authority, and to heaven and hell, brought to bear on the conscience, that the friends of Christ may be just as worldly minded, and as gay, and as prayerless, and as vain, and as ambitious, as other men? Are morality and kindness alone to be baptized, and are these *all* that the blood of the Saviour purchased on the cross? Then were those pangs in vain. And then this stupendous scheme of the incarnation and death of God's own Son, was a scheme of most mighty preparation for most unimportant results. But it is not so. He designed that religion should be seen, and known, and felt. He meant that his people should be a peculiar people. He intended to rear a kingdom unlike all other kingdoms; to be at the head of an empire unlike all other empires; and to marshal an immense host that should shine like the stars of night, or like suns, in the darkness of a lost world. And if we have not the peculiarities of his friends, we are the enemies of his cross!

I close this discourse by observing, that were the discussion to end here, perhaps enough has been already said to destroy the false hopes of some who now hear me. I have specified four particulars; and there may be many professors who, if weighed in *these* balances,

would be found wanting:—many who have not the slightest evidence that they have ever been regenerated; who are habitually indulging in some known sin without any effort to overcome it; who are pursuing a doubtful course of life without any pains taken to inquire whether it be consistent with the New Testament or not, and who are conscious that they have none of the peculiarities which went to make up the character of Christ; who are conscious that they have never formed a plan, or performed an action, which the man of the world might not do, and who have never put forth *one* effort solely to promote the glory of God.

If this be the state of the mind in any case, the conclusion is inevitable. Light has no fellowship with darkness, nor Christ with Belial. Painful as is the conclusion, yet we are to remember that an enemy hath sown tares in the great field which God will soon reap, and that the proof is clear in the New Testament that the enemies of Christ will in various ways come into his church. It was from no wish to give pain that the Saviour stated this doctrine, and it is from no wish to produce pain that it is now repeated. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend.” Timely admonition evinces more friendship than an attempt to “daub with untempered mortar,” or to “cry peace, peace, when there is no peace.” Not in words only, therefore; not in the way of professional duty merely, but in the sober language of friendship, and with the apprehensions of just alarm, do I exhort each professor to examine his heart, and his life. For soon these eyes will open upon the judgment seat; and soon our own ears will hear the words addressed to many unhappy mortals, once professors of the religion of Christ, “Depart from me, I NEVER KNEW YOU.”

I anticipate that this discourse will give pain, if pain at all, where it is least desirable that it should be done. The humble, pious, modest, praying, *real* Christian, is usually the one who is most alarmed by appeals like this. The man deceived; the cold, formal professor; the one really intended, and who is really the enemy of the cross of Christ, is usually the man least affected, least moved, least concerned. Judas was the last man at the table to express concern when the Saviour said that one

of them would betray him. "Lord is it I?" was the reluctant, and hollow language of the traitor at last. And the last man who might ask the question here, 'am I unrenewed, am I indulging in known sin, am I pursuing a doubtful course of life, am I failing to exhibit the peculiar spirit of a Christian,' might not improbably be the very one who has most undoubted evidence of being the enemy of the cross of Christ. Such are not alarmed. They thank not the Saviour for his admonitions and reproofs. Let us take to ourselves words and turn to the Lord and say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

## SERMON XIV.

### ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST. NO. 2.

Phil. iii. 18. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

FROM these words, in the last discourse, I proposed to consider the following points :

I. There is reason to believe that many professors of religion are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

II. What are the characteristics of that enmity, or how may it be known that they are such ; and

III. Why is the fact of their being in the church an occasion of grief and tears.

The first point was considered ; and also four specifications under the second head were suggested. I specified the following classes as being his enemies, though in the church :

(1.) Those who have not been born again or regenerated ; (2.) those who are living in the practice of any known sin ; (3.) those who are pursuing a doubtful course of life without any pains taken to ascertain whether it is right or wrong ; and (4.) those who in their conduct manifest none of the peculiarities of those who truly love him.

In the prosecution of the subject at this time, I propose to call your attention to some additional particulars which are expressive of hostility to him among those who professedly love him. Resuming the subject where we then left off, I observe,

(5.) In the fifth place, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ among his professed friends, who have a deeper interest in their worldly affairs than they have in the cause of the Redeemer. This is the particular thing that is specified in the verse succeeding my text. Paul, giving an account of the professors of religion at Philippi whom he regarded as the enemies of the cross of Christ, describes them as those who "*mind earthly things* ;"



that is, whose supreme care was manifested for the things of this life. "*Our* conversation," he elsewhere says, speaking of true Christians, "is in heaven;" their plans and thoughts pertain to the things of the earth, and they thus show, though they are professors of religion, the real principles by which they are actuated. And in the second chapter of this epistle, when describing persons of a similar character, he says, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Chap. ii. 21. And again, in 2 Timothy iii. 2, when describing a period of great apostasy and general declension in religion, he says, as the characteristics of those times, "Men shall be lovers of their own selves." This is the established mode of judging men's real character in the New Testament. "By their fruit," was the Saviour's rule, "shall ye know them." "Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles." When we see a shrub producing only thorns, we judge that it is a thorn-bush; when producing only thistles, we judge that it is a thistle.

My proposition is, that where men have a deeper interest in worldly affairs than they have in the cause of Christ, they are strangers to his religion. The proof of this proposition lies in a nut-shell. For (1.) The Redeemer himself said, "He that is not with me is against me." (2.) There must be some way of accurately arriving at a knowledge of character; and there is no better way than to observe a man's habitual walk and conversation. Character is the result of conduct. It is not a single deed; it is not a temporary ebullition of feeling. We do not attribute the tried character of virtue to the man who has resisted a single temptation; nor of heroism to the man who has been engaged in a single conflict. It is the man who has been *often* tempted, and who has successfully resisted temptation, to whom we award the praise of virtue; and it is the hero of many battles, and many scars, to whom we ascribe valor. We ask, in determining character, what is the *tenor* of the man's life; what it is that will call forth the latent principles of his soul? If it be to make money, we then say that that is his character. If it be to become honored, we then say so. If it be to shine in the gay circle, we then say so. And if the habitual purpose of the life be, that the man cares

more for the things of this world than he does for the cause of Christ; if they occupy more of his time and thoughts; if his actions and his plans are just like those of the men of this world, and just such as Satan would have them to be, he is the enemy of the cross of Christ. (3.) The interests of Christ's kingdom are intended to be supreme. He seeks no divided sway, and rules over no divided empire. He came not to establish a kingdom that should be just like all other kingdoms, nor to sit on a throne that is occupied by a rival. "If any man come to me," is his language, "and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26. If the interests of his kingdom, therefore, are not supreme in the affections, and if a man is not ready to sacrifice all other interests to his, he is the enemy of his cross. (4.) The principles of the Christian religion cannot lie dormant in the soul. If those principles exist, they will be manifested. Christians are to be the light of the world; and a light is not kindled that it may be put under a bushel. Religion consists in love to God and love to man. Can that love exist, and yet the man always act as if it did not exist? Religion consists in meekness, forgiveness, joy, peace, long-suffering, temperance, charity. Can these exist in the heart, and yet a man act just as though they did not? Religion consists in self-denial, in bearing the cross, in crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts. Can those principles exist, and yet the man be just as self-indulgent, just as much seeking the pleasures and enjoyments of this life as the men of the world? Religion is holiness, not mere morality; it is conformity to Christ, not conformity to an imaginary standard of excellence. Can *that* exist, and yet the man in his manner of life be just like all other men? Was there nothing in which Jesus Christ was distinguished from the world?

It is sometimes said that piety should be retiring, and unseen. Religion it is said, is a secret principle of the soul. It shrinks back from the public gaze, and seeks concealment, and should not seek publicity. But why is this said? There is nothing of it in the Bible; but every thing there is just the contrary. Hypocrisy, and mere

profession, and ostentation, and sounding a trumpet, *are* rebuked. But I ask a man to point me to a single passage in the Bible where the manifestation of pure religion is rebuked. "Let your light so shine before men," is the language of the Redeemer, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "He that is ashamed of me, and of my words before men, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and with the glory of the Father and with the holy angels." Religion, in the Bible, is supposed to be prominent, and manifest, if it exists at all. It is to constitute THE character; it is to distinguish the man. I point you to the example of Christ. Religion is every thing in his life. I point you to the example of Paul. You see nothing else in his life but his religion. Among Greeks, and Jews, and Barbarians, it is alike developed. I point you to David, and Isaiah, and John, and the holy martyrs, and ask what were *their* principles? The *men* were modest men; but their *religion* was open and bold. It constituted their very character; and is that, and that alone, by which they are known. And thus it is in all the works and doings of God. Is the sun that rides these heavens ashamed to shine; and does he hide his noontide beams under the plea that pure light should not be ostentatious? Is the moon—that, like the Christian shines by reflected light—ashamed to emit its rays, and to sleep on the "bank" and the silver lake? Are the stars—the wandering or the fixed—ashamed to send their rays on a darkened world? No. Light, pure, rich, varied, dazzling, shines forth from these heavens by day and by night, just as the light of the Christian's example is to be poured on the darkness of the world. It shines not indeed for display, but for use; not for its own glory, but like the light that should radiate from the Christian's life, to illustrate the glory of the Great Creator. And thus it is in all God's works. The ocean that he has made is not ashamed to roll; the lightning of heaven to play; the oak to spread out its boughs; the flower to bloom. The humblest violet on which we tread is not ashamed to exhibit its beauty, and display its Maker's praise; nor will the obscurest light in the true Christian's soul seek to be hid. Light is kindled there to shine on the darkness of a lost world.



And if Christian light does *not* shine forth in the life, we have the highest evidence that it has never been enkindled in the bosom.

The conclusion, therefore, is inevitable, that where men have a deeper interest in the things of this world than they have in the cause of Christ, they are the enemies of his cross. They are pursuing the course which the grand enemy of that cross would wish them to pursue. My meaning here will not be misunderstood. I refer to the cases where the concerns of this world are allowed to engross all a man's time; where this is the primary object of his solicitude; where it constitutes his *character*, and is that by which he is every where known; and where nothing will excite an interest in religion, further than the formality of its external observances. The character of such a man is that of a *worldly* man. He is living as worldly men live, and as the enemy of God would wish him to live, in estrangement from all the vital principles of the kingdom of the Saviour; and he must be judged accordingly.

(6.) They are the enemies of the cross of Christ in his church, whom nothing can induce to give up their worldly concerns for the cause of religion when God demands it.

I begin the illustration of this, by remarking, that, it is to be feared, there is a great and radical mistake on this point, in the feelings and language of most men. The mistake to which I refer is, a feeling that time, and talents, and strength, belong of right to us. We speak of *our* time, *our* talents, *our* property. We hear men use the language of complete self-appropriation, not in the qualified sense which they will use who believe that *all* belongs of right to God, but in the sense of absolute *propriety*. And this is not the language of the professed men of this world merely, but of the professed friends of God. The mistake to which I refer is, that of regarding *time* as *ours*, and *talent* as *ours*, and *wealth* as *ours*. For the truth is, that the affairs of this life, as well as the business of prayer and praise, should be pursued because this is a part of the service which we owe to God. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The business of the farm, or the counting-room, or the office, should be conducted with



as decided reference to *his* will as the services of the sanctuary. Nor will men understand the true nature of religion until Christianity is suffered to assert its claims over each moment of time, over each faculty of mind and body, and each plan of life. For a man may just as easily, and with just as much propriety, cultivate his farm, or make a machine, or engage in commerce, with a direct purpose to glorify God, and to honor the gospel in his appropriate calling, as when he prays, or reads the Bible, or goes forth as a missionary to save the world.

It follows, therefore, that the gospel was designed to overcome the love of the world, and to induce men to surrender *all* when God urges his claims. For the Redeemer said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross DAILY, and follow me." Luke ix. 23. "Let the dead bury their dead, but follow thou me." "Whosoever wilt save his life shalt lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Luke ix. 24—25. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26.

And thus we judge in every thing. You wish to try a man's patriotism. He has a dwelling near the battle-field where his countrymen have fallen in defence of freedom, and are bleeding on the cold earth. If he will not open his dwelling to receive the wounded soldier, do you esteem him to be friend of his country? You wish to know whether a man is your friend. If he will not give up his own petty gratifications to aid you in your distress, will you esteem him to be such? If your affairs are tending to bankruptcy, and he will not aid you; if you are naked and he will not clothe you; if you are hungry, and he will not give you meat, thirsty and he will not give you drink; sick, and in prison, and he will not come near to alleviate your pains, to wipe the cold sweat from your brow, to moisten your parched lips, will you regard his professions to be sincere; or will you judge them to be false, and hollow?

These principles are so obvious about common affairs that they need no further illustration ; and they are *just* as obvious in religion. My position is, that where nothing will induce men to regard their worldly concerns as subordinate to the cause of Christ, it is proof that they are the enemies of his cross. As an *illustration* of what is meant by this general principle, I shall refer to a few particulars. I specify, then,

First, *amusements*.—The position is, that if a professed follower of Christ will not abandon those which are obviously and certainly inconsistent with the gospel, he is the enemy of the cross of Christ. If he is engaged in just such amusements as the people of the world are ; if he engages in them with the same zest, and zeal, and at the same expense ; if he evinces the same gaiety, levity, and vanity that they do, it is proof that his heart is not with Jesus Christ and his cause, but with them. If he is in the habit of attending places which he knows the Lord Jesus would *not* have attended ; and if he is undistinguished in feeling, conversation, and deportment, from the gay and thoughtless who are professedly going away from heaven, and in the estimation of the Christian world going down to hell, it proves that he is the enemy of the cross of Christ. If he has a deeper interest in the fashionable assembly than he has in the humble place where the true friends of God seek his blessing by prayer, who can doubt where his heart is ? If he will abridge, or abandon his ordinary and proper times of secret devotion for the gaities of the fashionable circle, who can doubt what is the real spirit that actuates his bosom ? If a professed Christian, in relation to these matters, is pursuing just such a course as the great enemy of seriousness and of heaven would have him pursue ; if he is found in just such places, and making just such parties, and indulging in just such expenses as will gratify, not the Lord Jesus, but the Prince of darkness, he thus shows that he is the enemy of the cross. And if this is pursued from one year to another, and it becomes the established character that the course of life is just such as will gratify Satan, and pain the bosoms of the friends of God, the character may be as certainly known as though the judgment-day were already past, and the destiny sealed.

Secondly, *property*.—If a man will not surrender it to God when he demands it for his service, it proves that he is the enemy of the cross of Christ. If he is living for its acquisition just as the men of the world are; if he grasps it and hoards it with as much greediness as they do; if it be the characteristic of the man that he is a lover of gold rather than a man of prayer, it is a demonstration of his character which cannot be mistaken. If he pursues just such a mode of life as the enemy of God would desire—is just as avaricious, and selfish, and close; or just as extravagant, and profuse in his manner of living as he would wish him to be, it shows that he is the enemy of the cross of Christ. For thus we judge in all things. If a man pursues just such a course of life as will gratify the enemies of his country, we judge that he is in their interest. If he has just such objects, plans, and modes of living, as an enemy would prescribe; if he is living so that *he* could not *desire* a change, and would not *suggest* an alteration, we have no doubt about the *real* principles of the man. His own countrymen cannot doubt; the enemy cannot doubt; the Judge of all cannot doubt.

Thirdly, *time*.—When professed Christians form their own schemes, and employ all their hours in doing their own will; when they will not appropriate that which God requires for prayer, and for searching the Bible; and when they will not devote that which he demands in efforts to do good to others, it shows that they are the enemies of the cross. When their first thoughts in the morning, and their mid-day plans, and their last thoughts at night are of the world, and not of God, there is an indication which is infallible of the true state of their feeling. When a man professing patriotism, lives just as the enemy of his country would wish; when all his *time* is employed in a manner that goes to promote *his* plans, and to weaken the resources of his country, it shows that he is in the service of the foe.

(7.) Those are the enemies of the cross of Christ who are opposed to all that is peculiar in the *doctrines* of Christianity. One of the first things which the Lord Jesus has required is, that we should be willing to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. Nothing is more evident than that where there is an unwillingness to re-



ceive as truth that which God has stated to be truth ; to admit as fact that which he has declared to be fact ; and to repose sufficient confidence in him to believe what he says, that there can be no true love to Him, and no real friendship for his cause. If there be, therefore, an open opposition to the doctrines of the Bible, or a secret resistance of those truths, it proves that we have never yet submitted the understanding and the will of God. I refer to such cases as the following. (1.) Where a professed friend of Christ admits the doctrines of the Bible *in general*, but denies them *in detail*. (2.) Where he admits such doctrines in the Bible to be true as are found in systems of natural religion, but doubts, or denies those which constitute the peculiarity of Christianity. Many a man will admit cheerfully the doctrine that there is a God ; will admit in general the duties of morality, while he will be an open opposer of the doctrines of human depravity, of the atonement, of divine Sovereignty, of election, and of the agency of the Holy Ghost. (3.) Where a man will not examine these doctrines to satisfy his own mind whether they are true or false, he shows that he is the secret enemy of the cross. For one of the elements of the Christian faith is a willingness to know what is true ; and where a man has strong reasons to believe that if he were to examine them he would be convinced that they are true, and yet will not examine them, it shows that he is secretly opposed to them. (4.) Where a man becomes angry, and chafed, and vexed when those doctrines are preached ; where he demands the preaching of mere moral essays, and is irritated if the doctrines of religion are presented *just as they are in the Bible*, it shows that he is the enemy of the cross. He has not yet learned the first principle of religion which requires him to submit his understanding to God. (5.) Where he takes sides with the men of the world in regard to these high truths of the Bible, it shows that he is the enemy of the cross. Where in the circle of the gay, the vain, the worldly, and the scoffing, he is unwilling that it should be known that he holds them, or joins with others in opposing them, it shows that his heart has no true love for those doctrines. For these are the times and the places that show whether he has *really* any attachment to the doc-



trines of the Bible, or whether he is really ashamed of them. And when we see a man coinciding entirely with the men of this world in regard to those truths—feeling as they feel ; and talking as they talk ; and opposing what they oppose ; and doubting just what they doubt, we can be at no loss about his real character.

(8.) Finally. They are the enemies of the cross of Christ who are opposed to all the peculiar *duties* of the Christian religion ; who enter upon those duties with reluctance ; who rejoice when they are closed ; and who show throughout that the heart is not in them. I shall not pause to prove this, for it is perfectly apparent that in the sight of a holy God the character is to be determined by the state of the heart, and not by the external profession. In illustrating this head of the discourse, I refer to such cases as the following. (1.) Where the obligations of piety are admitted *in general*, but denied *in detail*. The man admits Christianity to be true in general, but he neglects prayer, or he lives for this world, or he indulges in envy or a desire of revenge, or he is ambitious, or he is unwilling to deny himself and take up his cross, until point by point the system of Christianity is all denied by him, and nothing is left but the name. There is nothing by which he is known in distinction from others, and the conclusion is, that the Christian religion exerts over him no influence. (2.) Where professors have no sympathy with the plans of true Christians. Where, while they admit the truth of Christianity in general, they have no sympathy with the active friends of Christ for the spread of the gospel ; where they are strangers to those plans, and uninterested in their success ; where they have no rejoicing at the conversion of sinners, and no tears to shed that millions are going down to hell ; where nothing ever rouses them to even a momentary effort for the promotion of the cause for which the Saviour died ; where they have no prayers to offer in secret, and no word of encouragement to speak to the true friends of Christ ; and where their bosoms would experience no heart-felt joy in hearing that continent after continent, and island after island should be converted to God. Are there not men in the Christian church who are fully acquainted with the state of political parties in the city, state, or nation, and

whose prompt co-operation may be confidently expected by their party, but on whose aid in promoting the salvation of men no reliance can be placed? Are there not men fully acquainted with all that will go to promote commerce, and wealth, and national prosperity, whose presence and counsel we should seek in vain in any direct effort to promote a revival of pure religion? Are there not men whose bosoms are agitated by any fluctuations in the money market, or by a prospect of defeat in a political campaign, who have no anxiety to express, and no tears to shed when the church slumbers, and when the gospel falls powerless on the heavy ears of men? And can the character of such men be mistaken, or the real object of their preference be a matter of doubt?—Again. Are there not those who are familiar with all the movements of the gay and fashionable world, and who possibly may be the charm of every circle that forgets God and that hates Jesus Christ, who have yet to offer the first sincere prayer for the conversion of a soul, and who leave the real friends of the Redeemer to struggle alone amidst many embarrassments and discouragements? And can it be a matter of doubt whether they have ever been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son? (3.) I refer to instances where all the sympathies are on the side of the enemy of Christ. Where the professed Christian readily falls in with the observations which the sons and daughters of gaiety and of sin make about revivals of religion; about the proper mode of preaching; about the faults of Christians, and the efforts of Christian benevolence; where, when an enemy of revivals is met, the professed Christian is an enemy also; when an enemy of missions is met, the professed Christian is an enemy also; when an enemy of godliness complains of a certain style of preaching, the professed Christian complains also; when an enemy of God dwells on the disorders of religious excitements, and the mistakes and errors of Christians, the professed Christian has the same remarks to offer, and has not one word to express in behalf of the injured and insulted cause of God. If, on all these subjects, he thinks just as the enemy of God thinks, and feels as he feels, and talks as he talks, can there be any doubt

about his true character? If my conversation be just such as the enemy of my country would desire, can there be any doubt that I am in his interest? And if, on the subject of religion, I talk just as the Devil would wish me to talk; if I make just such objections to the movements of Christians as he could wish me to make; if I oppose just those things which he would wish me to oppose; and, if my whole style of action and remark be such as would be gratifying to him, can there be any doubt about my real character? Not professions determine the character, but the language, the conduct, the life.

In closing this part of the discussion, I may observe, that the subject is one of easy application. My aim has been to make it so plain that it should be impossible to mistake my meaning; and I presume that I have not been misunderstood. The application of the *eight tests* of character which I have suggested, can be easily made. I may repeat a remark which is often made, that every consideration of interest, and duty, and hope, and self-respect, demands that we should be honest on this subject of religion, and if we are deceived, let us know it before it shall be too late forever. For "who among us can dwell with devouring fire? who can inhabit everlasting burnings?" "Faithful are the wounds of a friend;" and I can never do any man more essential service, if he is deceived, than to show him his danger, and point him to the cross of Christ, that he may obtain true peace and salvation.

If it should be said, as possibly it may be, that there is too much of *severity* in the remarks which I have thus made, this is my answer. I desire not to give needless pain; nor shall I. Pain now, *may* save an eternity of wo hereafter. My fears on that subject are not that too much anxiety will be excited, but that there will be too little, or that there will be none. I answer further, that these tests of character are *not* severe. In thousands, nay in millions of cases, they have been applied, and true religion in the heart has endured the trial. Thousands of martyrs have put these principles to the test, and they have borne it. In view of the rack and the stake; in view of conflicts with wild beasts in the amphitheatre, and of a lingering death by torture, the question as to the

sincerity of piety has been tried, and piety has sustained the trial. The question has come up there—oh, with what interest—‘Have I been born again; have I forsaken my sins; have I the true spirit of a Christian; have I a deeper interest in the cross than in all other things; have I been willing to forsake father, and mother, and wife, and children; do I love the great cause of redemption, and is my sympathy with the friends of God?’ and the answer before persecuting councils and kings has been prompt and steady, ‘I am ready to bleed or to be burned in attestation of the truth of this religion’—Too severe! No. Nothing which men can say; nothing which tyrants can do; nothing which Satan can devise, is too severe a test for the principles of Christian piety. These principles will bear the utmost scrutiny of torture on earth, and the deep searchings of the omniscient and most holy eye of God at the bar of judgment! And if our professed principles of piety will *not* bear all these, we are the enemies of the cross of Christ. I answer, finally, that a scrutiny far more severe than any which can result from my exhibition of the truth is yet to be applied to us. Death is soon to try us, to see whether our religion will sustain us there. The searching eye of the Almighty Judge is to try us at his bar, to see if our religion will sustain us there. And if our piety will not bear the scrutiny applied by an erring and most imperfect mortal, how shall it bear the trials of the bed of death, and the solemn investigations of the final day? Let us then again take words and turn to the Lord, and say with one mind, “Search us, O God, and know our hearts; try us, and know our thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting.” Ps. cxxxix. 23.



## SERMON XV.

### ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST. NO. 3.

Phil. iii. 18. 19. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction.

I PROPOSED, from these words, to consider three points :

I. There is reason to believe that many professing Christians are the real enemies of the cross of Christ.

II. What are the characteristics of that enmity ; or how may they be known to be such ; and

III. Why is the fact of their being in the church fitted to excite grief.

The first two points have been considered. The third will occupy our attention at this time ; and the enquiry is, why is the fact that there are in the church those who are the enemies of the cross of Christ fitted to excite grief and tears. I observe :

I. In the first place, that their being in the church is a fact fitted to call forth the feelings of tenderness and commiseration—not reproach and harshness of language—for they are cherishing hopes that will be disappointed, and are exposed to danger that is unfelt. The effect on the mind of Paul was to produce tears, not harsh reproof, not angry denunciation. He saw their situation as one that was to be wept over ; and he knew enough of human nature to see that all hope of reclaiming such persons was in the use of the language of kindness and love. Kindness will do what harshness never can ; and the love which expresses itself in gushing tears will make its way to the heart, while harsh words would only steel the soul, and confirm it in error.

A similar case occurred in the church at Corinth, and Paul met it in the same manner. Though required by the nature of the offence to proceed to the extremity of Christian discipline, yet it was still with tenderness and tears. “ For out of much affliction and anguish of heart,”

says he, "I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you." 2 Cor. ii. 4.

The same language of tenderness is evinced in the New Testament throughout, in regard to this class of persons. The Saviour's language was uniformly that of tenderness, and pity. He spake with a fearful solemnity of manner indeed; with words which show how much his soul was impressed with the importance of the subject; yet in his manner and words there is not a particle of harshness. We admit that when the Lord Jesus addressed the hypocrite—the man who professed a religion which he knew, he did not practice, we hear the language of severity. "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers," says he, "how can ye escape the damnation of hell!" The age in which he lived was eminently hypocritical; the men with whom he had to deal were many of them false professors. But we are not to infer that this is to be the characteristic of all times, or that men in the church who are strangers to religion, are to be addressed in this manner, by us. The Son of God, knowing the human heart, could speak with unerring certainty of the character of those whom he addressed. But the ministers of religion—themselves imperfect men, and having no right to assume pre-eminence in moral worth above their Christian brethren, will use the language of entreaty, not of denunciation; will seek to melt the heart by a tender setting forth of danger, not to overwhelm it by the denunciations of wrath.

Perhaps we are in danger of erring in regard to the character of those in the church who give no evidence of piety. In churches that are connected with the state; in lands where the obtainment of office or any other important temporal advantage may depend on a profession of religion, many will openly profess it who are influenced solely by a regard to the worldly consideration. But the temptation to this in this land, if it ever exist at all, exists to so inconsiderable a degree as not to call for any special animadversion. The instances remain yet to occur, probably, where a profession of religion has been assumed in this country for the sake of office; or where it would contribute to the attainment of

office. Nor is there reason to believe that the profession of religion is often, if ever assumed, because it will clothe a man with additional influence, or will facilitate the acquisition of wealth. The power which a man can wield in the church in this country is too inconsiderable to make it a prize to be purchased by known hypocrisy; and those who are intent on becoming rich will derive too little advantage from a profession of religion to make it an object to be purchased at the expense of a good conscience. I have been a pastor now more than sixteen years, and it has been my business to observe, as I was able, the lives of those who profess Christianity. And I cannot recall an instance in which I have seen evidence that the profession of religion was assumed, because it would elevate a man to office, or aid him in becoming rich. I have seen instances where it seemed to me, and still seems, that men were deterred from making a profession of religion because there might be apprehension that it would interfere with the hopes of office; or throw around them restraints which they would rather avoid in the acquisition of wealth. The conclusion which has been pressed on my mind has been, that ten men are deterred from making a profession of religion from an apprehension that it would interfere with their worldly interests, for one who professedly embraces Christianity from any hope of honor, or emolument.

But I have seen many, who, without any violation, as I trust, of that charity which hopeth all things and is kind, seemed to me to be strangers to the transforming and elevating principles of the religion which they profess. In looking at the evidences of piety as laid down with such simplicity in the New Testament, it has been so forcibly impressed on the mind that *all* those evidences were wanting, that it was impossible not to come to the conclusion that there was an utter mistake in their cherished hopes, and in the profession which they made. To this conclusion, the mind and heart of a pastor will slowly and reluctantly come. But having come to this conclusion, he is guilty of unfaithfulness to the master whom he serves, and to the souls which he would save, if he fails to express his apprehensions, or to tell his

hearers "often," and "even weeping" that "many walk who are the enemies of the cross of Christ, WHOSE END IS DESTRUCTION."

There is nothing more fitted to excite commiseration than this. If we see a son cherishing from year to year a delusive expectation that he will be heir to a great estate; and in the mean time, on the ground of this, making no preparation for the life which he must lead when thrown upon his own resources, our feelings towards him will be those only of pity, and of grief. If we see a man lying on a sick bed with every mark of approaching death, yet clinging to life; if we see the body waste away, and the hectic on the cheek, and hear the admonitory voice of the physician, and yet see the emaciated sufferer indulging in day-dreams of returning health, we have but one feeling in relation to the deluded man—not of severity but of tenderness; not prompting to rebuke, but exciting to tears. And so when we see an immortal soul cherishing the delusive hope of the "adoption" into the family of God, and of "the inheritance of the saints in light," can there be other than the language of pity? When we hear a man speak of treading the green fields of heaven, of slaking his thirst in the river of life; of reposing beneath the trees ever green in the Paradise above; of wearing the diadem, and of being clothed in the flowing robes of heaven; and then reflect that all this is the language of a lost, and still unransomed soul, is there a heart so hard as to use the language of severity, and are there eyes so unused to pity as to withhold their tears?

If it should be said that it is not reasonable to suppose that, when the delusion is not to be traced to voluntary hypocrisy, a God of mercy will recompense the error with everlasting torments, I ask how it is in other matters? I look at the great principles of the divine administration as they are developed in the world. I ask whether the fact that men are deceived, in the ordinary course of events, will make them safe from suffering, or turn aside the regular penalty of law? I see the man who is cherishing the delusive hope that his worldly affairs are prosperous, and who gives no heed to the admonitions of his friends. He is not benefited by



the cherished delusion, but ruin and bankruptcy come upon him with a step steady as time. I see a young man confident in the vigor of his constitution; unwilling to believe that he endangers his health by a course of dissipation; deceived about the strength of his own principles, and spurning the sober counsel of wisdom and of age. Nor is *he* benefited by his delusion, but he sinks like others to the woes and curses of the drunkard's grave. I see the pale, emaciated man clinging to life; cherishing the delusive hope that his disease will yet depart from him; and anticipating future days of health, and pleasure. Yet the disease is not stayed by his delusion. It approaches steadily the seat of life. Unawed, unrebuked, unarrested by his delusions, the destroyer is levelling the poisoned shaft, and the man finds the cold damps of death standing upon his brow even while he cherishes the hope of living long. So it is every where. The laws of nature and of God, operate with steady and unchanging power. They hasten to their end. When violated in regard to health, or morals, or property, or salvation, they have a penalty which is not met by self-deception; and which will not be driven back by the sunshine and calm of fancied security. Man must pay the forfeit; and neither in regard to his worldly affairs or to religion, will self-deception turn aside the penalty, or interpose to shield the body or the soul.

II. The existence of such persons in the church is a subject of regret and of tears, from their influence. This I shall illustrate in a few particulars. It is,

(1.) The loss of so much positive strength to the cause of the Redeemer. For it cannot be denied that those of whom I am speaking often embody not a little of the wealth, the talent, and the actual influence of the church. Nor can it be denied that, when this is the case, this very fact gives them a melancholy conspicuity, and prominence. If those who sustain this character possess an influence that spreads far through the political or commercial world; if they have power to excite to energy mighty masses of mind, and that talent is a dead weight on the church, the fact cannot escape the public observation, and be felt in all the interests of the church of Christ. If they whose power is felt most deeply in the commercial

or political world, are entirely inactive in the church ; if while they are known every where else, they are unknown here except in the bare record of their names ; if nothing will rouse them to even a temporary interest in the spiritual affairs of the church, it is just so much *abstraction* of that which professedly belongs to Christ ; and there can be no wonder if it diffuse a chill and paralysis over all the interests of religion. It is melancholy to reflect on what might be done in the church of Christ if all its members had the burning zeal of Paul, or the ever-glowing and pure love of John ; and then to remember that the designs of Christian enterprise—the conversion of the soul—the cause of revivals—the salvation of the world—lack the counsel, and the prayers, and the friendly co-operation of those who are best qualified, under God, to carry them forward. Paul spake of such with tears ; nor is it easy to withhold such expressions of grief when a man reposes in the bosom of a church, bearing simply the name of Christian ; a stranger to its feelings, to its plans, and to its spiritual peace ; a man whose power is felt in the political and commercial world ALWAYS ; in the religious world—NEVER.

(2.) Their influence in the church is a subject of grief, because it tends to discourage the true friends of God. There *are* not a few in all Christian churches, who are sincere and humble Christians. They love the Saviour who died for them. They have not merely in form, but in sincerity, devoted themselves to his service. Their hearts pant for the spread of the gospel ; and their most fervent desires are for the salvation of sinners, for the peace and happiness and purity of the church, and for the conversion of the world. Their purest joys are connected with the reign of Immanuel, and they wish to live *only* that by their influence and prayers, they may do something for the furtherance of his gospel on the earth. Their language is, in sincerity,

I love thy kingdom, Lord,  
The house of thine abode  
The church our blessed Redeemer saved  
With his own precious blood.

If e'er to bless thy sons  
My voice or hands deny,  
These hands let useful skill forsake,  
This voice in silence die.

For her my tears shall fall,  
For her my prayers ascend,  
To her my toils and cares be given,  
Till cares and toils shall end.

Now it is not needful to dwell on the discouragement which ensues when the irresistible conviction comes over the mind, that a professed brother or sister in the church has no interest in these things;—that they have no prayers to offer for the conversion of sinners; no tears to shed, like the Saviour, over the dangers of lost men; no cheering counsel for those who are endeavoring to do good; no aid to offer to the pastor in his great office, and no rejoicing when souls are converted to Christ. It is as if, in the struggle for liberty, a few should brave every danger, encamp on the cold field, and expose themselves to death, while professed friends should sit and look from their palace windows on the struggle without sympathy, and without a tear when brave men bleed.

But this is not the only cause of grief. It is not from mere discouragement because they are left to toil alone. For the Master has said, "he that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." In this strife between sin and holiness, heaven and hell, there is no neutrality. And it adds to the sadness of the scene, when they who are the professed friends of Christ not only stand aloof, but seek to build up that which true Christians labor to destroy, and to destroy that which God is endeavoring to build up. When the real friends of Christ are endeavoring to promote revivals of religion and the conversion of the world, and his professed friends are always found to countenance the views of the enemies of Christ, and to coincide with the men of the world, it adds to the grief of the friends of the Saviour by all the sorrow that attends violated friendship, and forgotten plighted love. "I was wounded in the house of my friends, and he that hath eaten bread with me hath lifted up his hand against me," was the tender language of the much injured David. "It was not an enemy that did it,

then I could have born it. But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance ; we took sweet counsel together and walked to the house of God in company." Ps. lv. 12, 13. And when too the professed friends of Christ are found the patrons of those things which his real friends are endeavoring to remove from the world as hurtful to health, and morals, and the salvation of the soul, can it be otherwise than a matter of grief? Can a house that is divided against itself stand? And does not a kingdom that is divided against itself fall? In one portion of the church there shall be prayer, and toil, and tears to discountenance and destroy the works of the devil ; and if in another the professed friends of Christ are doing just what the enemy of souls, of revivals, of humble piety, and of the world's redemption would *wish* them to do, how can it be otherwise than a subject of grief and of tears?

(3.) The deportment of such professors of religion gives occasion for the reproach and opposition of a wicked world—and it is, therefore, a cause of grief and tears. For the great mass of men ever have derived, and ever will derive their views of the Christian religion not from the Bible, but from the lives of its professors. Rarely will they take up the Bible to learn the nature of Christianity from the pure life, or holy precepts of its founder ; and rarely will they be convinced that that religion which does not *in fact* produce renovation of the heart, and holiness of life, can be from heaven—nor should they be. And though we can point them to many instances of consistent piety ; though we can refer them to multitudes of cases where Christianity has in fact reformed the profane, the sensual, and the proud, yet the influence of one inconsistent professor will more than neutralize the argument drawn from the consistent walk of *ten* who are ornaments to their high calling. The thoughtless, ungodly world has an *interest* in keeping the lives of the *ten* humble and holy Christians out of view, and in fixing the attention on the *one* professor that is a disgrace to the Christian name.

This reproach is unanswerable. The *fact* alleged is undeniable ; and the attention is easily fixed on some professor of religion with whom the objector has had business of



a worldly nature, where he has found him as close as other men; where he has seen a spirit as grasping; where he has witnessed some departure from moral honesty; where a promise has not been kept; or where there has been a case of overreaching, or of fraud. And where such a case *can* be referred to, it is all that the man of the world asks; and the force of argument with him is at an end. In vain may we press upon his attention the argument for Christianity from miracles and prophecy; in vain refer to the pure life and precepts of its founder; in vain appeal to its obvious and indisputable effects in reforming the world; in vain urge on the man that he should judge of religion by its precepts and recorded principles in the Bible, and that it is unfair to hold the whole system answerable for the faults of its professed friends, in vain is all this urged—for the inconsistent professor occupies the whole field of vision before the objector. It is *all* that he sees, or will see, or can be made to see; and the reasoning falls on heavy ears, and on a heart in respect to our arguments just like adamant. All the objections which *I* ever hear against religion are drawn from the inconsistent lives of its friends. All the obstacles which are thrown in *my* path in endeavoring to urge the gospel personally on the immediate attention of sinners are drawn from this quarter.

(4.) Their influence is a matter of grief because it is the occasion of the loss of the souls of men. They who are in the church without any religion are a stumbling-block over which others fall into perdition; and to the guilt of the ruin of their own souls, is to be added that of being the means of the everlasting ruin of others. This follows inevitably. They do not adorn the religion which they profess to love by their lives; they convey erroneous ideas of it every step which they take; they do not exert a Christian influence over their children, and friends, and fellow-sinners; their example and conversation is just that which the world desires to make it quiet in sin; they are pursuing just the course which Satan desires them to pursue in order that the sons and daughters of gaiety and folly should not be alarmed; and their whole influence is adapted to make the world thoughtless, and unconcerned, and prayerless. An un-

godly parent thus adds to his own destruction that of his children ; and unless special mercy interposes, a *whole family in hell* shall be the sad argument to illustrate the effects of being deceived in the church. We can conceive of no more affecting image of the inexpressible wretchedness of the world of despair, than when we think of a child thus reproaching a father or a mother as the cause of his ruin. ‘ You were a professor of religion. Your example and views of life ; your conducting me to scenes of fashion and gaiety, when the mind *should* have been impressed with the thoughts of God ; your neglecting to acquaint me with the Saviour of the soul, is the cause why I weep amidst these inextinguishable fires. But for that inconsistent, and unholy life of her that bare me, I should now have been among the blessed, and heaven would have been my eternal home. But O these horrors ! These deep, eternal burnings ! A father has led me there ; a mother has guided my footsteps down to death !’

III. The existence of the enemies of the cross of Christ in the church is fitted to excite regret and tears from the slender probability that they will ever be converted and saved. Paul’s grief arose mainly from the fact which he expresses, that their “end was destruction.” It is evident that he did not anticipate their conversion. Judas Iscariot was three years with the Saviour, under his direct ministry, and was not converted. In the account which our Saviour gives in the parable of the tares, it is evident that he did not suppose that they who were deceived *in* the church would ever be converted. “ Let both grow together until the harvest,” said he ; not, ‘ let the tares remain amidst the wheat with the hope of a change,’ but “ let both grow together until the harvest, and *in the time of the harvest* I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them.” Matth. xiii. 30. Joshua had no hope that Achan would be converted, and he was accordingly destroyed. God had no expectation that Nadab and Abihu would be converted, and the earth opened and swallowed them up. Peter had no hope that Ananias and Sapphira would be converted if they remained in the church, and the judgment of heaven was manifested in their death. And the

current representations of the Bible may be appealed to as a proof that the conversion of a man in the church is an event scarcely contemplated, and for which no provision has been made.

An appeal to fact would sustain this conclusion. Amidst the evidence which we cannot resist that there are many such in the church, how rare a thing is it that even one abandons his falsely-cherished hope, and becomes a sincere believer. The die seems to be cast, and the destiny sealed. The profane, the profligate, the dissolute, the moral, the aged, and the young, the rich and the poor, are converted by hundreds around them, but no Sun of righteousness visits the Greenland of their souls, or removes the deep darkness which blinds their minds. The gospel is borne to other lands, and the benighted pagan hails its coming, but it has no consolations for the deceived professor, and its pleadings and its thunders die away alike unheeded on the ear.

This melancholy fact may be accounted for in a word. The condition of a deceived professor is unfavorable to conversion. He dreams of a heaven to be obtained with an unhumbled heart, without self-denial, and without bearing the cross, and he is unwilling that the pleasing dream should be disturbed. His fancied security shields him from all the appeals which are made to men. The exhortations which are addressed to sinners to repent and to believe the gospel he does not apply to himself, for he does not professedly belong to that class. The arguments which are urged on Christians to lead a holy life; the motives which are urged from *their* inextinguishable love to the Saviour, he does not regard, for he has none of the Christian's feelings, and none of his real desire to glorify God the Redeemer. Belonging not to the world *professedly*, and not to Christians *really*, the appeals of divine mercy for the salvation of the soul almost never reach the heart, alarm the conscience, or arouse to hope or fear. Yet it is fancied security, not real. It is that kind of security which a man will take, who, when *Ætna* or *Vesuvius* should cast forth lurid flames, and heave with an approaching eruption, instead of fleeing to the distant plain, should be content with reposing beneath a tree at



its base, and hiding his eyes, and stopping his ears, should regard himself as secure.

Here I close the consideration of this text. In conclusion I shall make two remarks.

(1.) The first is, that there is an obvious propriety for honest self-examination. The necessity of this is urged upon us by all the worth of the undying soul; by all the value of the blood of Christ; by all the apprehensions of a dreadful hell. On this of all subjects we should be most honest with ourselves; and yet on this of all subjects we are prone to take up with slightest evidences. The solicitude of the merchant to save his affairs from bankruptcy, is untiring; the advocate toils to gain his cause, and the physician to save his patient; the farmer has no rest till the title to his land is without a flaw. Yet that merchant, perhaps, will feel no solicitude that his eternal interests may not be bankrupt; nor that professional man feel any concern that he is in danger of losing his soul; nor the farmer that his title to heaven is insecure. On the very point where we should suppose there would be most interest felt, there is often the least; and the last thing to which immortal man, in the church or out of it, can be roused, is the worth of his own soul.

Were it thus in other cases, we should be impressed with the folly. Let a man be seized with disease, though not immediately alarming, and let it be suffered to run on without care or anxiety until death shall lay its cold hand on him, and we do not doubt its folly. Yet how many are under the influence of the incurable disease of sin, who allow themselves to be deceived; who listen to no language of entreaty to examine; and who will soon find that their hopes of heaven have been founded on the sand! Once more, I may be permitted, not in form, but in the soberness of sincerity and of love, to entreat you to be willing to know the worst of the case. If deceived, be willing to know it, and to seek mercy before it shall be too late. If we are Christians let us know it, and let our lives testify accordingly.

(2.) Let me address one word to those who are not professors of religion. I beseech you not to make the follies, and sins, and self-delusions of others the means of your own destruction. You, as well as professed Chris-



tians, whether they are deceived or not, are advancing to the same burial-place of the dead, and to the same judgment-seat. You will stand before the same God, and give up an account, not for *them*, but for *yourselves*. "Every man shall give account of *himself* to God." It will constitute no safeguard to you that *they* are deceived. It will diminish none of the terrors of death, that your wife or child was deceived, and must perish forever. It will be no ground of acquittal to you, if *they* are lost. I will add, it will furnish no consolation to you in hell—no, not the drop of water to cool the parched tongue—should they go down to be your everlasting companions. To your own master you stand or fall. They *may* be deluded; you *certainly* are. They, in cherishing a hope of life to which they have no claim; you, in supposing that no preparation is necessary, and that there is no heaven or hell beyond the grave. You, deluded amidst the gaities, and fascinations, and the jostling plans, and the vain expectations of happiness in *this* world; they in the church in regard to the hope of heaven. But what then? Are you safe? Hear me. When all the delusions of life shall have vanished; when we shall be summoned to attend to the sober reality of dying, and of going on the journey up to God, and giving in the solemn account at his bar, and of entering a world where there is no delusion, it will remove none of the sad realities of those scenes to remember that others were deluded as well as you, and that they, as you anticipated, sunk down to the world where "are hypocrites and unbelievers." But let me ask you, my friend, a question. What if *their* hopes should be well-founded? What if it shall appear that *you alone* are deluded and deceived? What if they rise to heaven, saved by the hope which they now cherish? What if, notwithstanding all the difficulties of the way, and the delusions around them, and their many doubts and fears, they are able to bear the scrutiny of the All-seeing Eye in the great day? Solve me this question, I beseech you—"If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

## SERMON XVI.

### THE RULE OF CHRISTIANITY, IN REGARD TO CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

Rom. xii. 2. And be not conformed to this world.

I do not know a more difficult passage in the New Testament than this; and I enter upon the discussion of it with very little hope of being able to furnish a satisfactory solution of the many inquiries which may be made respecting its meaning, and its application. What *is* conformity to the world—is the question which immediately presents itself on reading the text. It is easy to see that a command so plain as this appears to be, may give occasion to a great variety of opinions. Every Christian may have an “interpretation,” and “a doctrine” of his own. Every Christian denomination may have its own rules. One will insist on confining it to the feelings and general spirit of the man; another will maintain that it refers only to the vices and crimes of the world; a third will extend it to its gaieties; a fourth will affirm that it extends to every article of apparel; and a fifth to the ordinary intercourse and courtesies of life. Many will demand that the rich shall abandon their houses, their furniture, and their equipage, and come down in all these things to the level of their neighbours; and many of the rich may deem their neighbours unduly self-indulgent in their manner of life. All of us can see some things in which we judge others to be too much conformed to the world; and most of us have many perplexing questions pertaining to our own duty as Christians, and to the demands of this and other similar texts of the Bible. Most of us probably are satisfied that there has been, and is, in the church, too much conformity to the world. Our fellow men who are not Christians, often reproach us on this subject, and demand that we should be less conformed to the follies and vanities in which *they*

freely indulge. Poor compliment they pay to their own conduct and discretion; and a sad employment to blame others for that which *they* feel at liberty to practise.

Amidst these conflicting opinions, I have little hope of traversing a perplexed and difficult inquiry with entire clearness and satisfaction. If I can excite thought on the subject among conscientious men, one part of my object will be gained. If I can establish some principles by which we are to interpret the text, I shall do all that I hope to be able to effect. It would be easy to declaim on this subject; and it is always easy to utter unmeaning and loose denunciations against Christians for conformity to the world. There may be occasion for all the severity of reproof ever uttered; but after all, the inquiry arises, what *is the duty* of Christians, and by what principles shall they judge of the text?

The following inquiries I shall attempt to answer:

I. To what does the rule apply?

II. What in the text is it designed to reach and effect?

III. What are the proper principles of its application?

1. To what does the rule apply? Here, also, many questions might be asked. Was it intended to be limited to the time of Paul, and to that peculiar age of the world? Christians, especially at Rome, were then placed amidst the luxuries and gaities of a refined, a vicious, and an idolatrous age. To conform to *that* age, would be to coincide with the splendor, pride, ambition, fashion, and even corrupt principles of a generation peculiarly wicked and vain. Christians were expected to be separated, and to constitute a distinct community. The difference between them and others was to be marked, open, decided, and there could have been little difficulty in applying the rule.

But the aspect of the world has, in some respects, changed. Idolatry is banished. Its altars are overthrown. Christianity has diffused intelligence, refinement, kindness, and a thousand kindred virtues through the community. It has elevated society much nearer to its own standards; and it is asked whether the rule is still to be applicable? If so, in what respects, and to what extent? Yet on the question of the applicability, or jurisdiction of the rule, there can be no doubt. It is unrepealed. There

was no intimation that it was to be confined to *that age*, or to any peculiar age. Other directions respecting Christians have a similar meaning. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John ii. 15, 16. "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Matth. vi. 24. "For do I now persuade men or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." Gal. i. 10. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." James iv. 4. The text is, therefore, manifestly a precept of the divine law that is to extend its jurisdiction over all the times, and places, and circumstances to which it *may* apply, until the peculiar community called the *world*, shall be extinct.

But if applicable to all times, to what class of actions does it apply? Is it to the dress, the mind, the heart, the demeanor, the conversation, or to all? Is it to be limited to *one* class of these objects, and then to cease in its influence, or is it to extend every where? I answer, it is like all other divine laws. They are given in a *general* manner, and are to be interpreted on the same principle. The general principle of the laws of God is, that they are *first* to be applied to the heart and conscience, and then to *follow out* all the conduct, and extend their jurisdiction over all. Human law is satisfied if it can control the *external* deportment, and preserve the peace and prosperity of the community. Divine law, extends its purpose of control to the *heart*. If a proper influence can be exerted over that, it supposes that *all* will be well; and the text is evidently one of the laws of Christian conduct, enacted on this principle. The *terms* of the law are applicable either to the mind, or to the external deportment; to the feelings, opinions, and principles of action, as well as to the dress, and conduct of life. Its



direct aim therefore, is the heart; its indirect, and complete aim is reached only when it controls the entire deportment.

It is still asked *what place* in the code of Christian laws is this rule designed to occupy? Here I answer, 1. The design of *this* law is not to keep Christians from open vices and crimes. That is placed on better defined ground; and it is presumed that Christians cannot commit them. Those things which are absolutely and grossly evil, are made the subjects of express statute. Crime is specified, and absolutely forbidden. It is not left to a rule so easily perverted; so capable of abuse and variation, as the simple injunction, not to be conformed to the world. It is expressly declared that men shall *not* be idolaters, or profane, or Sabbath-breakers, or haters of their parents, or liars, or adulterers, or thieves, or drunkards, or revilers, or false witnesses, or covetous. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 19. 21. Eph. v. 4, 5. Heb. xii. 14; xiii. 4. Rev. xxii. 15. Ex. xx. Whatever may be the conduct of the world on these subjects, the law of God is positive, and explicit. 2. The command in question is not designed to teach Christians that they should not coincide with the world *in any respect*, or *on any subjects*. It is not to be considered as enjoining *singularity for the sake of singularity*. Such a purpose would be unworthy any legislator. Unless the thing forbidden was either wrong in itself, or was attended with bad consequences, it would be the evidence of tyranny or caprice, not of wisdom, to demand separation. The conformity then, is to be presumed to be in those things which would be *injurious* to the object which the lawgiver had in view. The matter of fact is, that there are many things in which Christians and others may, and must, externally at least, coincide; and in which to affect singularity, would be to countenance evil. When the apostle directs Christians to think of "whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of *good report*;" (Phil. iv. 8.) he evidently supposes that in these things Christians are to coincide with others. Thus also it is in respect to industry, charity, temperance, courtesy, meekness, order. 2 Thess. iii. 10. Rom. xii. 10, 11, &c. 1 Pet. ii. 17; iii. 8. Rom.

xiii. 7, 8. Gal. v. 22. If the men of the world are industrious, Christians are not to be directed to be idle; if they are temperate, Christians are not to be intemperate; if they are courteous, Christians are not to affect rusticity, or to violate the proper rules of refined intercourse. On these, and a thousand kindred subjects, Christians and the world are to coincide; nor does religion, common sense, or good morals, demand or *permit* singularity. But 3. There is a large class of objects and actions which come under *neither* of these denominations, which are not fixed by absolute statute, and which it might yet be proper to prohibit, or in which there might be demanded a separation from the world. To make laws on them all, would be endless. These actions and feelings, the principle of the text is designed to influence and control. The *general principle* is settled, and the application is to be made by the conscience of each Christian, on his own responsibility. These actions pertain to the greater part of our lives and intercourse. It is not often that a man will be called on to apply the statute respecting murder to himself, perhaps never; but the principles of religion pertaining to his daily conduct, need to be carefully applied to the ever varying forms and allurements of the world. You may never have occasion to apply to yourself for example, the ninth commandment; but there is a *large territory* of acts—a vast field over which *some law* should be extended, which cannot be reached by the decalogue, or by any direct statute. Such are all those acts and emotions pertaining to dress and style of life; to modes of intercourse; to gaiety and fashion and equipage; to the governing purposes of the heart in relation to our intercourse with men; to the rules of business; and to that endless variety of things in which the men of the world consider it no harm for them to indulge, and in which they indulge freely. Now over this broad *territory*—this vast and ever varying presentation of objects and things, God has left the simple direction, “be not conformed to this world.” The principles of the life are not to be formed by the opinions of the world. The rule is designed to occupy this vast region of thought and feeling, over which there could not be the formality of express statute for every thing. It is a kind of balance

wheel to the whole, to preserve it in order ; and a general direction, that in relation to all these things, the opinion and conduct should not be formed by the views of the men of the world, but by other principles. The law then, I suppose, is one not confined to the age of Paul ; was not designed to control things in themselves absolutely criminal, and subject to express statute ; not designed to promote singularity for the sake of singularity, and to separate Christians from the world in things which are proper ; but was designed to reach and control the conduct, the feelings, and deportment in that vast variety of things which the world may present from age to age as objects of pleasure, gaiety, business, luxury, splendor, or ambition.

II. Our second enquiry is, what the rule *is*? A few remarks may enable us to understand this.

1. There is a difference contemplated between Christians and other men—a difference pertaining to principles of action, to feelings, to laws, to destiny. 1 Cor. iv. 7. 2 Cor. vi. 14. 17. Isa. lii. 11. Rev. xviii. 4. The whole arrangement by which this difference is produced and promoted, shows that it is not one of trifling magnitude or importance. To *produce* it, cost the labors of the Son of God, “who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Titus ii. 14. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” 1 Pet. ii. 9. To advance this work calls into exercise all the means of grace, and all the *direct* operation of God on the human mind. While as men we have many things in common with other men, yet as Christians we are expected to possess something original and peculiar. There is no change in the human mind so great, thorough, and abiding as that of regeneration. John iii. 1. 7—compare Eph. ii. 10 ; iv. 24. There is no kingdom more different from all other kingdoms, than the empire of Christ over the soul is unlike all other empires. “My kingdom is not of this world,” is his language, (John xviii. 36,) and while we may have many things in common with others, yet as *Christians* his em-



pire over us is to be regarded as original and peculiar. His law is to form our opinions and practice, and his will to influence our conduct. 1 John ii. 3, 6. The world may be governed by its own laws. The laws of fashion may control one portion; the laws of honor another; the laws of ambition a third. One community may frame its conduct by a set of artificial statutes, meaning or unmeaning, which may have been agreed on respecting the intercourse of the theatre, the ball-room, or any other place of amusement or of business. Another community is under the influence of the laws of honor—so called—and those laws are understood, and capable of being written down. The *Christian* community rises in the midst of all others—subject to laws of its own voluntarily assumed, and claiming that their jurisdiction should be admitted to extend over all the thoughts and doings of the life. It claims that no other community should be allowed to *originate* statutes for the government of Christians, or modify their laws, or demand their submission to its mandates. It claims *original* jurisdiction over the whole soul and body, and sternly rebukes the interposition of the communities under the influence of the laws of honor, fashion, or vice, if they come in with a claim to modify or repeal the original and independent statutes of the Christian community. Christianity regards all such interference as aggression. If they coincide with Christianity in any thing, or in every thing, it is well, and Christians are not to affect singularity. If they differ, the Christian community has another rule by which it is governed. Now the essential idea of the rule which I am wishing to explain, is, that Christianity has original jurisdiction in all these cases; that the laws of the New Testament are the last appeal; and that as far as this community is concerned, its statutes are to govern—nor are they to be modified by any intrusions of the laws of any other commonwealth.

I do not know that I present the idea clearly. Let me attempt further to illustrate it. I have a family in a gay, wicked, thoughtless city. I am surrounded by families which have different views altogether from those which I have on the various subjects of employments and morals. As the head of that family, I give laws by which



I expect it will be influenced. Around me may be one family governed by the laws of fashion; another by the laws of honor; a third, perhaps, by certain arbitrary rules which pick-pockets and highway-men have set up. I do not interfere with them; nor do I say that in *no respects* shall *my* family coincide with them. If they have *any thing* commendable, I shall not denounce it, nor demand that my children shall affect singularity. I shall not demand affected singularity in quaint and unusual modes of speech; in an inconvenient, or a ridiculous style of dress; or in an unnatural and forced gait or demeanor; or in a disgusting or an odious tone of utterance, for the mere *sake* of singularity. I expect my children will obey my original laws, and remember that *I* have the jurisdiction in the premises. If my neighbor presumes to legislate in the case, and demands that *my* family shall forsake my laws; if he affirms that *my* statutes are stern and harsh, and should be modified—that is a question for me to consider, not for him to legislate on. Just so it is with Christianity. Christ has established a set of laws, and demanded a certain course of life. If the members of any other community, or of fifty others, should in many things, or in *all* things, coincide with what *religion* would produce, the Christian is not to affect singularity in the case. The question is, whether I am adhering to the laws of the peculiar kingdom by which I am governed, and not whether others are falling in with those laws also. What effect would the Christian religion produce if obeyed by the entire community, and if its principles were suffered to be acted out every where? That is the question; and not what compound and motley system of enactments can be formed into a code, by amalgamating Christianity with the artificial rules which regulate your communities of the gay and fashionable, of the proud and ambitious.

Let us take another illustration. Lycurgus framed a code of laws for Sparta. He had an object in his eye in each one of his statutes, and he designed to rear a peculiar community. It was not the love of singularity; it was not a wish to differ from others for the mere sake of being different. It was with reference to his great object—to make the Spartans valiant, hardy, laborious,

daring freemen. With this object in his eye, he framed his laws; and this design was understood by every Lacedemonian. Suppose, now, he had left some such direction as the text—‘Be not conformed to surrounding nations, or even to the other republics of Greece.’ The command would have been intelligible. It would not mean, ‘do not in *any* thing coincide with others, for *they* may be temperate, and laborious, and valiant, as well as you, and in this do not affect singularity. *Their* conduct in this respect is just what is required of you. Do not pursue it *because* they do, but because it will contribute to the great designs of the republic.’ The command would forbid conformity to other people, if that conformity should interfere with the purpose of the Spartan lawgiver. It might easily be seen that even the arts of Athens, the extensive attention to statuary and ornamental architecture, might not consist with the main design of the Lacedemonian. Innocent as they might be in themselves, or consistent as they might be in the members of the republic of Athens, yet should the Lacedemonians turn their attention to statuary or to the fine arts *as a people*, they would abandon the peculiar design of their lawgiver in making them a hardy and valorous race of freemen. It would easily be seen that the delicacies and refinements of Corinth; its fashion and splendor, its luxuries and amusements, as well as its licentious habits, would be inconsistent with the design of the Spartan. Whether they were well *for the Corinthian* was another question; and a question which it did not pertain to the Spartan to settle. His inquiry was of a different kind. What was the will of the lawgiver? And are these things consistent with his plain and obvious directions? His design was to train up a peculiar community, and every member of that community was qualified to judge of that design. He contemplated that no other one—not even one of the confederated republics of Greece, should presume to come in and legislate for his people. If his peculiar design was consistent with their views and conduct, it was well. They would be conformed to, not because they were the views of Athens or Corinth, but because they contributed to the great purpose of the Lacedemonian lawgiver. In no case had they a right to

originate laws for his people, or to demand that his laws should be conformed to their views.

Thus with the Christian. If the views and conduct of others coincide with his, it is well. If they do not, they are not at liberty to come in and demand that he shall be conformed to them. He has higher laws, and a higher object. He has a purpose which strikes on to eternity. His aim is to prepare for heaven. Theirs, to live for time. Nor can they claim jurisdiction over conduct that has been directed by the Son of God, and that he has judged best in ordering his peculiar community. The simple question is, whether a proposed course of conduct or opinion is consistent with the spirit and life demanded by the King of Zion.

The amount of the rule, as I understand it, is, that no other society or authority is permitted to originate laws or opinions that shall control the Christian. The first act of his religion is to submit to the laws of Jesus Christ, and to forsake all others that are inconsistent with his. Acts ix. 6; xvi. 30. No matter from what community they have been derived, they are to be abandoned. Be it from the society of the vicious; the men of honor or of ambition; the pleasure-loving, the rich or the gay; or even from a beloved parent or friend, if inconsistent with the pure spirit of the gospel, they are to be abandoned. Acts iv. 19, 20; v. 29, and Luke xiv. 26. God is raising up a peculiar community—an empire, amidst many other empires; a kingdom in the midst of other kingdoms—a kingdom of seriousness, and prayer, and love, amidst the kingdoms of the gay, and dissipated, and the worldly. His kingdom, though surrounded by others, is designed to be peculiar—not for the love of singularity, but because all such designs involve singularity. Thus the Athenian was singular; the Spartan was singular; the Corinthian was singular; the Roman was singular. Thus, too, the votary of pleasure is singular, and the follower of fashion is singular, and the man seeking wealth and honor has his own views about things, and is peculiar. Each society has its own laws; and the kingdom of God is not designed to take its complexion, camelion like, from surrounding objects, but to derive its peculiar features from the laws of the Son of God. If



the Christian community is singular, it is not because God loves singularity, but because the world has gone out of the way, and its maxims are an improper guide for those who are seeking to save their souls. If this be the meaning, therefore, of the rule, we are prepared—

III. To enquire on what principles it may be applied?

I might be contented with observing here, that this is the appropriate business of every Christian; and that God has made him responsible for the honest application of the rule to all his conduct. No small part of our probation consists in ascertaining whether we are disposed faithfully to apply the rule, or whether we are disposed to be governed by every change of fashion, by every scene of amusement, by all the allurements of gaiety and of wealth. It would seem that the rule was of easy application, and that the examination of ourselves on this head would be one of the least difficult parts of the Christian enquiry. But I may be permitted here briefly to specify a few principles on which the rule is to be applied. Remember, here, that I speak to *Christians*—those who belong to that original and peculiar community which the Son of God came to establish. You will remember also that I claim no infallibility here, or certainty that I am right. I suggest these principles as they seem to me to be demanded by the rule.

1. You are not to regulate your feelings and views, your apparel and manner of living, your conversation and deportment, with a view of leading the world in their own ways of vanity, pleasure, and ambition. You are not to seek to be distinguished in the manner in which they seek to be distinguished, and for which alone they live. The people of the world are tending to a different destiny from the Christian. It matters little in what way they go—whether through the ball-room, the theatre, or any other scene of vice and sin—they are going to their own home, and it is a sad procession, however gay or gorgeous, where a Christian moves at the head of the thoughtless throng that is sporting down to hell.

2. You are not to regulate your opinions, and feelings, and conduct, by the people of the world. You are not to approve of a thing because they approve of it; to do a thing because they do it; to love a thing because they



love it; or to hate a thing because they hate it. They have their own views of these things, and you are to have yours—or rather you are to imbibe the views of the Son of God. With the feelings which the world has about the objects of life, a thousand things may be consistent which would be repugnant to the laws of the kingdom of Christ. While they think life is valuable only because it ministers to the appetites, or contributes to pleasure, numberless objects may accord with their notions, all which would interfere directly with the design for which the Christian lives, and with the laws by which he is governed. If they have no other object in life but to be amused, or to be caressed or adored, it may be well to deck themselves, and sport over the grave. Their dance will soon be over. So have I seen in the beams of the western sun, as he sank behind the hills, thousands of gay insects sporting in the departing rays—joyous in the mazy dance, and unconscious that they were in the last beams of the parting day—and perhaps in the last fleeting seconds of a very brief existence. Soon the sun withdrew his beams, and darkness came over the earth, and the dance was ended, and also their life. Another generation may play in those beams to-morrow. But this one is gone. So the gay and thoughtless world moves on to darkness and to death. The scenes of their festivity are soon to end, and darkness will cover them, and in the sunshine of gaiety and fashion *they* will be seen no more. All the joy they seek or desire is included in the brief summer sun of their earthly being—the fast fleeting moments of fashion, pride, and folly here. To seek supremely for adorning and admiration, in the scenes of gaiety, and of sin, and of amusement, without prayer and without God, may have a most melancholy consistency with their views of human life. But for you who are living for eternity, and looking for an everlasting dwelling in that world which has no need of the moon, nor of the sun; amidst the splendors of that world where the Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof, such amusements and gaieties may be folly; may be worse—may be crime.

2. If in any of your views and deportment you coincide with the world, it will not be because *they* do it, but because it will be *best*. I know that this principle may

be difficult to be understood, and may be abused. Still it may be the correct principle in the case. Let me illustrate it. In many things, as I have remarked, you may coincide with the world. You are industrious. So are they. But your industry is not because the *world* requires it, but because it is *best*. It is required by the law of your religion. You are temperate, so may they be. But you are temperate, not because this is the *fashion of the world*, but because your *religion* demands it. You are courteous, polite, kind. So may be, externally at least, the people of the world. In this you may coincide. But you are not thus *because they* are. You do not do it, *because* they have originated it, or because they have the right to dictate its forms. You do it because it is the *nature of your religion*. It prompts to kindness, truth, courtesy, tenderness of feelings and character, mutual respect, civility. It enthrones on the *heart* of the Christian what may sit loose in *form* only, around other men. It gives *vitality* to what elsewhere may be a *mere shadow*. And if the world changes its views on this subject, and adopts any system of intercourse that may consist well enough with *its* views of morals, you are not at liberty to follow it if it is a departure from the spirit of Jesus Christ. A mere votary of the world, for example, who has no idea of morals but a certain artificial and shapeless standard adopted for convenience, may incorporate a thousand falsehoods and evasions into his system, and make a show of deception a part of his well understood rules of intercourse. For his, or her purpose, and in accordance with his or her views of truth, it may be consistent enough to say, or to instruct a servant to say, that they are not at home, when they *are* at home; or to say that they are sick, when they *not* sick; or that they are engaged, when they are *not* engaged. For a man or a woman who is devoted to the service of the God of truth, it becomes a different matter. The question of conformity to the world in this thing, comes up with reference to the inquiry how it will appear before Him who *cannot lie*, and where it will be too late to deceive. You are regular, decent, comely in your apparel, and your style of living. It is not because the world does it, but it is the nature of religion to produce this in a com-

munity. It elevates and refines; produces order, and personal neatness and propriety of living. It does not require the man of wealth to seek the wigwam of the Indian, or the hut of the Laplander. It does not require him to become a hermit; nor would it change the Christian community into monasteries. It does not say that the Christian prince or man of wealth should clothe himself in rags, or deny himself the ordinary comforts connected with the rank of life where God has placed him. It demands that he should carry out the influence of religion on that rank of life—that he should live and act in a certain manner, not because the world does it, but because Christian propriety demands it—because if the Christian religion were extended to the *entire* community, there would be men who had wealth, who would still be Christian men; there would be men of professional skill and talent, who would be Christian men; and in that rank of life, it would be as easy to apply the principles of the gospel to what a man has, and does, as it would be in a far inferior station. Christ never denounced differences of rank in life. He never engaged in the project of the dissatisfied and disorganizing Roman people, in the demands for an Agrarian law, nor in the covetous schemes of modern infidelity to break up all ranks in society, to denounce the rich, or to demand that all property should be reduced to a mass to be subject to the arts of a cunning and unprincipled leader. He designed a scheme of religion adapted to the existence of various orders in the community. He demanded that the principles of the rich should no more be modeled after the judgment of the world, than those of the poor. Live, and feel, and act in this situation of life, is the language of his gospel, so as in the best way to evince the influence of the gospel in the rank of life in which you are placed.

4. A fourth obvious principle in which Christians will apply the rule is, that their views and feelings will not be prompted by a desire to elicit the applause and approbation of the world. Your conduct will be regulated by a higher law. It is not to produce admiration, envy, rivalry, flattery, competition, that you live; it is not to be the subject of conversation, commendation, or praise; it



is TO PLEASE GOD. If the kingdom of which you are a member stood alone; if the empires of this world were wholly removed to other abodes, your conduct would then be regulated by the Bible. So should it be now. This is one of the plainest applications of the rule. And yet if honestly applied, what a sad invasion would it make in the Christian church! Remove from the followers of Christ all that has been assumed for the purpose of being admired by one another and by the world; all that has been the result of envy, and rivalry; all that is adjusted to catch the passing gale of applause; all that comes under the denomination of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, and a most fearful flight would be given to numberless ornaments, and a most sad invasion would be made on the style of living in every Christian community. Stripped of the meretricious decorations which the world has persuaded and *enjoined* the church to assume; dressed in the virgin purity which the Son of God has prescribed for it, it would at once rise to elevated influence, and be clad in beauty and in honor. We are not to be guided by the world. But there is an old Roman maxim, that it is right to be taught by an enemy. And if in any thing it would be right to listen to the people of the world it would be in this; not what they *wish* us to be, but what they understand our religion to require. Glad would they be that every Christian should be like themselves. But well do they know that religion demands a difference, a great difference, an eternal difference, and well do they understand that this difference should be manifest in the life. And never do they utter sentiments more worthy of the attention of Christians than when they denounce us as fools or hypocrites for conformity to their own senseless and vain opinions about the scenes of gaiety and ambition—about the theatre, and the ball-room, and the trifles by which *they* contrive to amuse themselves in the brief summer sun in which they are moving to a world of wo. Christians have a better inheritance; and much and well do the men of this world marvel that they find their pleasures in their scenes of gaiety and folly.

5. A fifth principle of the rule. It forbids all mingling



with the world which is inconsistent with the great objects of the kingdom of Christ, or which will not on the whole tend to promote it. It is not needful to state what those objects are. They are known to all Christians. They may be summed up in a desire to become personally assimilated to Jesus Christ, and to bring our fellow-men to the hope of the same Heaven. They demand of course the spirit of prayer, of seriousness, of self-denial; the faithful discharge of our duties in all the relations of life; a conscientious appropriation of our time, our influence, and our wealth; a faithful meeting of all the demands made on us as Christians and as men. God has given us enough to do; and if we follow his will we shall not be oppressed with useless time, or afflicted with *ennui*. Now with this desire to do precisely what will be approved by the mind of Christ, we may apply the rule before us. It will be a test of the propriety of a thousand things which might otherwise be the subject of much debate. It will constitute a nice *tact* by which we may approach a great variety of objects without danger of error. A child can much more easily decide whether a thing will be acceptable to the mind of his father, than he could settle its propriety by argument. The inhabitant of Sparta could see at once that many things were inconsistent with the design of his republic, which he could by no means settle in an abstract manner. Whether the aim of the Athenian was proper, or the mild and soft pleasures of the Corinthian, he might not be able to settle by argument, but this would not be the way in which to train up the Lacedemonian. So it might become a question of abstract casuistry about a thousand scenes of amusement. It would be easy to argue by the hour in favor of parties of pleasure, and theatres, and ball-rooms, and all the vanity of fashionable life, and the mind might "find no end in wandering mazes lost." But apply the rule before us, and all mist vanishes. Since the beginning of the world, no professing Christian ever dreamed that he was imitating the example of Jesus Christ, or honoring the Christian religion in a theatre, a ball room, or a splendid party of pleasure. And equally clear would be the decision in reference to multitudes of pleasures which it is needless to specify. If these things were favorable to the designs

of the founder of Christianity, they might, and should have been enjoined. But how singular would have been such directions in the New Testament! How marvellous would appear such a command when placed beside those which enjoin prayer, and spirituality, and humility, and self-denial! If, by the patronage of such places, a man is promoting the Christian religion or the salvation of his soul, then they may be lawful. If they will not bear this test they cannot be right, and *may be dangerous*.

6. A sixth principle or application of the rule, A Christian should have a spirit and temper *above* the things that influence his fellow-men. Though in the *midst* of these scenes, yet he may not be influenced by them. A man may have wealth, and it may be manifest that his affections are not supremely fixed on it. He may be surrounded by a thoughtless world, and yet be evidently living above it. Christianity produces a spirit that is elevated *above* these things; that draws its consolations and its principles of action from far different objects. A man on the throne may be a Christian as really as in a cottage, and he may become a nursing-father to the Church with all the splendor of the diadem on his brow, and the imperial purple flowing in his train. Thus it may be manifest that Christianity is uppermost; that the man of rank and wealth desires to imbibe its spirit, and to diffuse its blessings around the globe. Rules, you may not be able to give him, but to the man himself, and to all others, it may be clear that he is actuated by the love of God, and a desire to be useful to a dying world.

Again. A man may be placed in circumstances which require him to live in a mode which to a poorer man might be deemed luxurious or extravagant. Of this no other man can be the judge. To his own master he stands or falls. But Christianity may be diffused over all his conduct. Let him be AT LEAST as large and liberal in religion as in other things. Let him be the liberal patron according to his rank, and station, and wealth, of all that would promote the influence of religion, and the extension of the kingdom of the Son of God in all lands. Thus it is that the spirit of the gospel may as really take up its abode in the mansions of wealth, as in the cottages

of poverty ; nor is there any reason why it should not reign there, and interweave itself with all the incidents of life, as well as constitute the bright and lively details in the "short and simple annals of the poor." Conformity to the world may exist no more amidst those who are blessed with wealth, than with those in far obscurer life, and the man possessed of the riches of the Indies may as little think of it, or regard it, as those who live by toil from day to day. That religion has ever yet produced its appropriate influence on all those classes of men, I do not maintain. That the rule in our text may not be applied to all classes, none can affirm.

The conclusion, then, to which we have come is, that in this rule God has furnished a guide to numberless actions, and to the spirit of the life ; a rule which no man should apply to his neighbour, but which every man should honestly and perpetually apply to himself ; a rule which you can take to all employments, and amidst all the enjoyments of life ; a rule which may show its influence in the palace and the cottage—on the throne, and in the obscurest dwelling where resides a ransomed child of God.

## SERMON XVII.

### THE BLESSINGS OF A BENIGNANT SPIRIT.

Coll. iii. 12. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God—kindness.

WHAT an invaluable blessing is a kind and benignant spirit! How invaluable to an individual, in a family, in a church, in any community! It is a spirit which the gospel is adapted to produce; which serves much to remove the asperities which are met with in life; which contributes to happiness every where. My wish, at this time, is to illustrate its nature and importance; and I shall show,

I. In what it consists; and

II. Its value.

I. Kindness, or a benignant spirit, consists in the following things.

(1.) In a *disposition to be pleased*—a *willingness* to be satisfied with the conduct of others towards us. This disposition lies back of all external actions, and refers to the general habit of feeling. It is not that which is created by any sudden impression made on us, or by receiving from others any proofs of favor; it is a previous disposition rather to be satisfied than dissatisfied; rather to look on the favorable than the unfavorable side in the conduct of others; rather to suppose that they are right than to suppose that they are wrong; and rather to attribute to them good motives than bad motives. It is such a disposition that if we ever think unfavorably of others, it is because we are *compelled* to do it rather than because we *wish* to do it; such that any moment we would be willing to listen to any explanation in extenuation of their conduct.

This disposition contributes much towards our being actually pleased. It is usually not difficult to find enough in others that we can approve to make life pleasant and harmonious when we are disposed to; and this disposition will do more than all other things to make



social life move on with comfort and with joy. This disposition stands opposed to a spirit of fault-finding and complaining; a temper which nothing satisfies, and which nothing pleases; a propensity to magnify trifles and never to forget them; and a turn of mind that is irritable, and that is constantly chafed and fretted. For this latter state of mind we are now much in the habit of blaming the nervous system, and there can be no doubt that from the intimate connexion between the mind and the body, a disordered nervous system may have much to do with such a temperament. But it may be also true that the body is often blamed when the soul should be, and that the responsibility is often improperly changed from the heart to the nervous system. More frequently this disposition is to be traced to long habits of indulgence; to mortified pride; to an overweening self-valuation; to the fact that the respect is not paid us which we think we deserve; to the fact that the heart is wrong, and the will obstinate and unsubdued. The spirit of the gospel of Christ would do more to eradicate this evil disposition than any physical applications to the nervous system, and it is the heart rather than the bodily health that demands appropriate treatment. A man who is willing to be pleased and gratified will in general pass pleasantly through life. He who is willing to take his proper place in society, content with the small share of public notice which properly belongs to an individual, and believing it to be possible that others may be as likely to be right in their opinions as he is, will usually find the journey of life to be a pleasant way, and will not have much occasion to be dissatisfied with the world at large.

(2.) A spirit of kindness or benignity consists in a disposition to attribute to others the possession of good motives when it can be done. One of the rights of every man in society is, to have it supposed that he acts with good intentions unless he furnishes irrefragable proof to the contrary. This right is quite as valuable as the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"—and is essential to them all. He may do me a more palpable and lasting wrong who ascribes to me a bad motive, than he does who takes my purse; and he has no more right to do the one than the other. Now there are many

actions performed which may be either from a good or bad motive. There are many where the action may be attended with injurious consequences when the motive is good. There are many where the motive may be for a long time concealed; where we may not be permitted to understand why it was done; and where it may seem to have been originated from the worst possible intention. In all such cases, it is our duty to suppose that the motive was good until the contrary becomes so clear that it can no longer be doubted. Where an action may be performed from either a good or a bad intention, it is a mere act of justice that we should attribute the correct and noble motive in the case rather than evil one—or at least that we should not assume that the motive was bad—for “love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things; AND NEVER FAILETH.” 1 Cor. xiii. 6, 7, 8. Yet there are some persons who seem never to have heard of this rule. The worst possible motive is at once suspected. The worst construction is given to an action. In the view of such persons every circumstance combines to lead to the conclusion that the motive was a bad one. Such persons, too, will have that unhappy species of memory which recollects all the *ill* of another, and forgets all the *good*; and when an action is performed of doubtful character, it is surprising what a number of similar deeds will be found to have been treasured up in the memory all going to confirm the suspicion that the motive was a bad one. Now a spirit of benignity and kindness will lead us to pursue directly the contrary course. The first impression on such a mind will be, that the action was performed from a good motive. That impression will be retained until there is positive proof to the contrary; and will be confirmed by the recollections of the former life. The good will have been remembered; the evil will have been forgiven and forgotten. Past deeds of unkindness towards you will be found to have been written in sand which the next wave washed away; deeds of beneficence will be found to have been engraved on marble or steel. A kind memory has treasured up all the favors ever shown you—and now they come flocking to your recollec-

tion, and help to throw the mantle of charity over the act now even if it be wrong.

(3.) A spirit of benignity or kindness consists in bearing with the foibles, infirmities, and faults of others. We do not go a great distance with any fellow-traveller on the journey of life, before we find that he is far from our notions of perfection. He has a temperament different from our own. He may be sanguine, or choleric, or melancholy in his temperament, while we are just the reverse. He has peculiarities of taste, and habit, and disposition, which differ much from our own. He has his own plans and purposes in life ; and like ourselves he does not like to be crossed or embarrassed. He has his own way and time of doing things ; his own manner of expression ; his own modes of speech. He has grown up under other influences than those which have affected our minds ; and his habits of feeling may be regulated by his education, and by his calling in life. Neighbors have occasion to remark this in their neighbors ; friends in their friends ; kindred in their kindred. In proportion as the relations of life become more intimate, the more these peculiarities become visible ; and hence the more intimate we become, the more necessity there is for bearing patiently with the frailties and foibles of others. In the most tender connections, like that between a husband and wife ; a parent and child ; a brother and sister, it may require much of a gentle and yielding spirit to adapt ourselves to their peculiarities so that life shall move on smoothly and harmoniously. When there is a disposition to do this, we soon learn to bear and forbear. We understand how to avoid the look, the gesture, the allusion, the remark that would excite improperly the mind of our friend. We dwell on those points where there is sympathy and harmony ; and we thus remove the asperities of character, and the feelings and affections meet and mingle together. With any one of our friends there may be enough, if excited, to make life with him uncomfortable. A husband and wife—such is the imperfection of human nature—can find, if they will, enough in each other to embitter life, if they choose to magnify foibles, and to become irritated at imperfections ; and there is no friendship which may not be marred in



this way if we will suffer it. The virtues of life are tender plants. Love is most delicate in its texture, and may not be rudely handled. To be preserved, we must cease to expect perfection. We must be prepared for little differences of opinion, and varieties of temperament. We must indulge the friend that we love, in the little peculiarities of saying and doing things which may be so important to him, but which can be of so little moment to us. Like children, we must suffer each other to build his own play-house in his own way, and not quarrel with him because he does not think our way the best. If we have a spirit of kindness, we shall cease to look for perfection in any others; and this is much in promoting our own happiness in any relation of life. It will make us indulgent, and forgiving, and tender. Conscious of our own imperfection, we shall not harshly blame others; sensible how much we need indulgence, we shall not withhold it from them; feeling deeply how much our happiness depends on their being kind toward *our* frailties and foibles, we shall not be unwilling to evince the same indulgence towards *them*.

(4.) A kind and benignant spirit is shown by our not blaming others with undue harshness when they fall into sin. In no circumstances does frail human nature need more of the kindness of charity and forgiveness—no where usually is less benignity shown. We weep with the father who has lost his only son; we sympathize with the man who has lost his all in a storm at sea; we compassionate him who is deprived of the organs of vision or of hearing, to whom the world is always dark, or who is a stranger to the sweet voice of wife or child, or to the soul-stirring harmony of music. But when a man is overtaken by a fault, all our sympathies at once usually die. We feel that he has cut all the cords that bound him to the living and the social world, and that henceforth he is to be treated as an alien and an outcast. We exclude him from our social circles. We strip him of office. We bind and incarcerate him. We place him in a dark, damp, cold dungeon. We feed him on coarse fare. We separate him from wife, and children, and home, and books, and friends. To a certain extent all this is inevitable and proper. We owe it to ourselves;



we owe it to the community. But we need not withhold our kindness from an offending brother. We need not withdraw all the expressions of benignant feeling. "Brethren," says Paul, "if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Gal. vi. 1. "Love suffereth long and is kind; love is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; believeth all things; hopeth all things." Let the following things be remembered when a brother is accused of a fault. (1.) He is a brother still. He has the same corrupt, fallen, ruined nature that we have—and originally no worse. "John Bunyan, but by the grace of God," was the honest expression of the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, when he saw a poor victim of profaneness and intemperance. That erring, guilty, and wretched man—that man of guilt, and profaneness, and crime, is thy brother. You and he had the same father. The same blood flows in your veins and his. That wretched female—that frail and guilty woman—is thy sister. You had a common, erring mother. She once had sympathies like thine own. She once had a heart that could love and be loved, like thine. She had a mother that loved her as thine loved thee. She once was playful, and blithe, and happy, when a child—and perchance beautiful and accomplished, as others are. Fallen, and ruined, and guilty as she may be, she is not beyond the possibility of being saved; she is not beyond the reach of prayer. For the soul of that same guilty and erring daughter of vice, the Saviour's blood was shed as well as for thine own; and the "kindness and love of God our Saviour" may yet recover even her, and make her a companion with thyself in glory. Remember (2.) that when another *seems* to fall into sin, if you understood all the circumstances of the case, its aspect might be greatly changed. "Judge not, that ye be not judged; condemn not, that ye be not condemned," was the command of the Master. Luke vi. 37. "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." 1 Pet. iv. 8. Remember (3.) that when a brother seems to err or fall, it is possible that an explanation may remove all the difficulty. Give him that opportunity. It is due to him.

Appearances, which he could not control, may have been sadly against him; and malignant enemies may have helped the matter on. It is due to him to allow him a full opportunity to explain all. A kind spirit would make you ready to listen; and the same spirit, when he has *confessed* his error—if he has done wrong—would lead you to say, ‘My brother, I forgive you. The offence shall be remembered no more. I will forgive you as Christ hath forgiven me. Your fault shall not be alluded to in our intercourse; it shall not be allowed to make me unkind, or suspicious; and I will never refer to it to harrow up your feelings, or to suffuse your cheeks with shame. So Christ hath forgiven me; so I forgive you.’ (5.) A kind and benignant spirit is that which prompts us to aid others when in our power. It wishes well to the stranger; to the wayfaring man; to the fatherless; to the poor; to the prisoner; to the oppressed. It looks rather on considerations why they should be aided than on those why they should not be; and asks the question, not how much we *must* do for them, but how much we *may* do. On the man who has failed in business honorably to himself, or without dishonor, it looks with benignity, and asks in what way he may be assisted, and not how his fall may be accelerated. The poor man at the door it meets with the enquiry whether he may be assisted consistently with other duties and obligations. For the man in oppression, it seeks relief when it can be done, and prompts to measures to secure it. When relief is almost hopeless, still it looks benignantly towards the sufferer, and is willing to listen to any suggestions for his aid. It does not lead us at once to sit down as if nothing can be done—appalled by the magnitude of the evil, or indifferent to it; nor does it lead us to favor the opinion that all attempts at relief are improper, or to be abandoned.

I may add, on this point, that where relief cannot be afforded, it should be declined with a gentle and benevolent heart. It often happens, from the necessity of the case, that we must decline aid to the poor, to the needy, to the stranger, and to the cause of humanity and religion at large. Circumstances put it out of our power to assist them. But it mitigates the evil if benevolence beams in

the eye, and gentleness and love dictate the terms by which it is done. It may become pleasant even to have an application rejected. It may be done with so much good will and sincerity; where it is so evident that the heart is in it; where there is such a manifest wish that the circumstances were different, that the pain of the refusal shall all be taken away, and good shall be done to the soul even where the aid sought for the body could not be granted. We are often troubled by applications for aid—I say *troubled*, from their frequency, and because we allow them to trouble us. We are liable to constant solicitations of this sort—solicitations all of which we cannot comply with. It can neither be right for us, nor would it be possible for us to comply with them all. Part of those who apply to us for assistance we know; part are strangers whom we may never see again. Yet we are to remember that most of them are children of misfortune. Many of them have by nature sensibilities as keen as we ourselves, and they will feel a cold look and a stern repulse as much as we. We are to remember, too, that not a few of them suffer more from the necessity of asking assistance than from almost any other ill of life. Long will a widowed mother suffer from poverty and want, before she will go to the stranger to seek assistance. Long would she suffer still rather than do it, but it is not her own sufferings that prompt her to it;—it is the cry of her children for bread, the desolation of her home without fuel, and without food, and without work, that compels her to subdue her strong reluctance to solicit charity, and she does this under a depth of mingled, agitated emotions which the affluent never know. If to all this there is now to be added the cool repulse; the harsh, forbidding look; the refusal even to hear the simple story of her sufferings, and the sufferings of her children, and if she is to return and say to them that nothing can be obtained for them—and to see them weep and suffer the more by disappointment, you infuse the bitterest dreg into her cup of woes. Christian kindness would have mitigated all; Christian kindness might have prompted to that *little* aid from your superabundant wealth, which not being missed in *your* dwelling, would have made hers to her like Eden. The same thing is



true when help is asked for any object of beneficence. The man who asks your aid to relieve a people suffering the evils of famine; or to help a family whose all has been consumed by fire; or to liberate a slave from bondage; or to enable a man to purchase his wife or children in order that they all may be free together; or to send the preached gospel to the heathen world, has a right to a kind reception. On his part it is a work of benevolence, in which he is usually no more interested than we are—and in doing it he may have overcome much reluctant feeling, and sacrificed many comforts, from the strong conviction of duty. He has a right to expect, where aid cannot be granted for his object, that his feelings shall not be harrowed up by an uncivil and cold reception. If aid is declined, he has a right to expect that it should be in gentleness and love—so declined that it may be pleasant for him and for you to meet when your circumstances shall be better.

(6.) Once more. A kind spirit should be shown toward those who are applied to for aid, and who decline to assist us. Here, I fear, we walk sometimes not charitably toward others. We apply to them for assistance, and are refused. How natural to feel that there was something unkind in it! Especially is this so, if we see him to whom we apply live in a splendid house, and surrounded with the means of luxury; or if we find him engaged in a large business; or if we see him rolling along in his carriage. And it may be difficult to avoid the conviction that he might easily have assisted us, and that he is a man of a narrow and parsimonious spirit. I admit too, that in not a few instances this irresistible conviction may be well founded; and I admit, too, that there is *always* an inconsistency—a painful, and I believe a guilty inconsistency—where this style of living is maintained, and where the hand is systematically closed against the objects of Christian benevolence. But there is often much that may be said that would mitigate the harshness of your judgment. You see one side. But you may not know how much he is embarrassed in business; or how much he secretly gives away to other objects; or how many poor relations he may have dependent on him; or how imperative may be the demand on him



just now to meet pressing obligations. For one, I am endeavoring to learn to exercise more charity for those who seem to me to be able, and who fall below the standard in benevolence which I should regard as the true one. I think on two things; first, that I do not know all the circumstances in the case; and second, that to his own master each one standeth or falleth. It is *his* business, not mine. I can insist only as a right that he should show "*kindness*"—whether he give or withhold. In other things he must act as he shall answer it to God. Such are some of the things involved in kindness—a disposition to be pleased—a readiness to impute good motives—a patient bearing with the faults and foibles of others—a disposition not to blame them harshly when they fall—a readiness to aid, and kindness when aid cannot be rendered—and a charitable spirit toward those who refuse to aid us when we apply to them. Let us,

II. In the second place, consider the value of this spirit. A few remarks will be all; and with these I shall close. In illustrating this, I observe,

(1.) That much of the *comfort of life* depends on it. Life is made up of little things that are constantly occurring, but which if disarranged or displaced render us miserable. Breathing is in itself a small matter, and ordinarily scarcely noticed; the beating of the heart, and the gentle flowing of the blood are in themselves small matters, and it is only when they are deranged or laborious that we become sensible of their importance. So in morals and in social intercourse. The happiness of life depends not so much on great and illustrious deeds; not so much on glory in the field of battle, or splendid talents, or brilliant eloquence, or the stern virtues that shine in daring achievements, as in the quiet duties that are constantly occurring. It is in the kind look; the gentle spirit; the peaceful, calm, contented disposition; the cheerful answer; the unaffected and unobtrusive interest in the welfare of others; the mild eye and the smooth brow which show that the heart is full of love. When these are what they should be, they are to social intercourse what unobstructed breathing, and the healthful flow of blood along the numerous arteries and veins of the body are to the vigor and comfort of the bodily system. Life cannot be

happy, if it can be prolonged, without them; and when these things do not exist, comfort dies.

(2.) *Usefulness* depends on this no less than happiness. A man's usefulness in the Christian life depends far more on the kindness of his daily temper, than on great and glorious deeds that shall attract the admiration of the world, and that shall send his name down to future times. It is the little rivulet that glides through the meadow, and that runs along day and night by the farm-house that is useful, rather than the swollen flood, or the noisy cataract. Niagara excites our wonder, and fills the mind with amazement and awe. We feel that God is there; and it is well to go far to see once at least how solemn it is to realize that we are in the presence of the Great God, and to see what wonders his hand can do. But one Niagara is enough for a continent—or a world; while that same world needs thousands and tens of thousands of silvery fountains, and gently flowing rivulets, that shall water every farm, and every meadow, and every garden, and that shall flow on every day and every night with their gentle and quiet beauty. So with life. We admire the great deeds of Howard's benevolence, and wish that all men were like him. We revere the names of the illustrious martyrs. We honor the man who will throw himself in the "imminent deadly breach," and save his country—and such men and such deeds we must have when the occasion calls for them. But all men are not to be useful in this way—any more than all waters are to rush by us in swelling and angry floods. We are to be useful in more limited spheres. We are to cultivate the gentle charities of life. We are by a consistent walk to benefit those around us—though in a humble vale, and though like the gentle rivulet we may attract little attention, and may soon cease to be remembered on earth. Kindness will *always* do good. It makes others happy—and that is doing good. It prompts us to seek to benefit others—and that is doing good. It makes others gentle, and benignant—and that is doing good.

Let it be remembered, also, that it is by the temper, and by the spirit that we manifest, that the world forms its opinion of the nature of religion. It is not by great deeds in trying circumstances that men will judge of the

nature of the gospel. The world at large cares little how Ignatius and Polycarp felt or how they died. Perhaps the mass of those around you never heard their names. They are little impressed by the virtues which Latimer, and Ridley, and Cranmer evinced at the stake. But that unbelieving husband cares much for the gentle and kind spirit of the wife—for all his happiness depends on it; that brother is interested much in the conversation and the spirit of his sister—for he daily observes her temper, and is forming his views of religion from what he sees in her; that child is constantly marking the temper of the father and the mother, and is forming his views of religion not so much from what he hears in the pulpit, or in the Sabbath-school, as from the temper which you evince from one day to another. In these fields—humble though they may seem, and little as they may appear to furnish a theatre for the display of eminent virtues—your usefulness lies. There, with the “gentleness” that was in Christ you cannot but be useful; and exhibiting such a spirit you will not live in vain.

Let it be remembered, also, that *all* usefulness may be prevented by an unkind, a sour, a crabbed temper of mind. A spirit of constant fault-finding; a harsh-judging temper; a constant irritability; little inequalities and perversenesses in the look, and air, and manner of a wife, whose brow is cloudy and dissatisfied her husband cannot tell why; or of a husband chafed, and fretted, and morose when he returns home from his daily toil, and who is satisfied with nothing, will more than neutralize all the good you can do, and render your life any thing but a blessing. Some come into the church cursed by the fall with such a crabbedness of temper. Some have an unmanageable and perverse nervous temperament. Some are proud, and envious, and disappointed, and ambitious, and all these things are constantly breaking out in their professedly religious life; and even amidst much that is excellent, these passions are so constantly showing themselves that no one can tell whether there is at heart any true religion. Now you may give money for benevolent objects, but it will not prevent the injury which will be done by such an unhappy temperament. You may build



churches, and found schools and asylums; you may have "the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and you may bestow all your goods to feed the poor, and give your body to be burned," and all will not answer the purpose. It will all be like "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Nothing will be a compensation for that "love which suffers long and is **KIND**:—that love which envieth not, which is not soon provoked, which thinketh no evil, which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and which **NEVER FAILETH**."

(3.) And finally, this virtue is commended to us by the example of the Master—the Lord Jesus. "I beseech you," says Paul, "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." II. Cor. x. 1. What an expression! **THE GENTLENESS OF CHRIST**! How much is there in that short sentence! How much to admire; how much to imitate! Christ performed great deeds—such as no other one ever did; but not that we should imitate *them*. He spake to the tempest, and stilled the rolling billows—but not that we should lift up our voices when the wind blows, and the thunders roll, and the waves are piled mountain high, and attempt to hush them to peace. He stood by the grave and spake, and the dead man left his tomb, and came forth to life—but not that we should place ourselves by the graves of the dead and attempt to restore them to life. He opened the eyes of the blind, and taught the lame man to leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing—but not that we should imitate him in this, or attempt by miracle to give vigor to the feeble, or health to the diseased. But Christ was meek and gentle, that we might be so too. Christ was benignant and kind, that we might be too. Christ patiently bore reviling that we might do it also; he was not irritable, and uncharitable, and fretful, and envious, and revengeful—and in all these we may imitate him. His was a life of benevolence, diffusive like the light of a morning without clouds; a life undisturbed by conflicting emotions; unbroken by a harsh and dissatisfied temper; kind when others were unkind; gentle when the storms of furious passions raged in their bosoms; and tranquil and serene



while all around him were distracted by anger, and ambition, and envy, and revenge. To us may the same spirit be given; and while the world around us is agitated with passion, and pride, and wrath, in our hearts may there reign evermore "the gentleness of Christ." Amen.

## SERMON XVIII.

### SECRET PRAYER.

Matth. vi. 6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

THE sense of this text is plain. The Saviour is reproving the ostentation and pride of hypocrites for the public manner in which they offered their prayers. In contradistinction from them he directs his disciples to go into a place where they would be alone with God; where no eye could see them but his eye, and no ear could hear their voice but his ear, and there to pray to him who dwells in a world unseen by mortals. The subject, therefore, which is now before us is, SECRET PRAYER. In considering it, I shall direct your thoughts to the duty; to the proper times and modes of performing it; and to the rewards or advantage of it.

1. I begin with the duty of secret prayer. You will observe the peculiar manner in which this is mentioned in the text. It is apparent that the Redeemer meant to be understood as expressing his conviction that prayer should be offered to God. Yet he rather assumes as a matter of course that his followers *would* pray, than positively commands it; and he gives no direction as to the frequency with which the duty is to be performed. It is thus much unlike the usual form of precepts in the Bible, and wholly unlike the rules which men would have prescribed. Mohammed specified the number of times and the exact hours when his followers should pray; and perhaps some would be disposed to ask whether the apparently lax and indefinite manner in which the Saviour has left the subject, would not be attended with the consequence that his followers would seldom pray, or would perform the duty in a most hurried and heedless manner. Where it was so easy to command

and to specify, was it the intention of the Saviour to leave it designedly indefinite? If so, what object did he propose to secure by this? These circumstances make it the more important to ascertain exactly in what way the duty is enjoined in the Bible. A few remarks will explain this part of our subject.

(1.) The text may be regarded as having all the form of a command. The frequency with which prayer is to be offered is indeed not specified, but the duty of entering into the closet, and praying in secret to God, is enjoined; and enjoined on the supposition that this *would* be done. The same thing is implied in James v. 13: "Is any afflicted among you? let him pray." Let him present his individual wants and desires to God; let him offer his secret and solitary supplications to him who hears prayer. So in Phil. iv. 6: "In *every thing* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." Men have individual wants, and troubles, and temptations. They have feelings which others cannot know, and which it is not desirable they should know, and which, therefore, are to be brought before God only in secret prayer. So in Eph. vi. 18. "Praying always with *all* prayer and supplication in the spirit;"—that is, with all the usual modes of prayer, not limiting your supplications to the sanctuary and the family, but using *all* the ways of prayer in which you may present your wants before God.

(2.) But it is more by example than by express precept that the duty is enforced in the Scriptures; and that example was exhibited by all the holy men who walked with God on the earth. It will be sufficient to refer you to Jacob in his lonely wrestling with the angel of the covenant when on his way to a distant land; to Abraham who stood alone before the Lord and prayed for Sodom, (Gen. xviii. 22); to David who said, "Evening and morning, and noon will I pray and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice" (Ps. lv. 17); to the author of the cxixth Psalm, who said, "seven times a day do I praise thee; because of thy righteous judgments" (ver. 164); to Daniel who "kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed, and gave thanks before his God," (Dan. vi. 10), and to the example of the Redeemer himself. With the

Saviour's habits on this subject we are not indeed made fully acquainted. He himself enjoined secrecy in prayer, and the whole record of his life shows that he sought it; and all that we can expect is some general intimation, showing that he was in the habit of secret prayer. We have just the record which we should anticipate. We are told, on one occasion, that "in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place and there prayed," Mark i. 35. On another occasion we are told, that "when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the even was come he was there alone." Matth. xiv. 23. On another occasion we are told, "that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." Luke vi. 12. His prayer also in the garden of Gethsemane was private, for he was withdrawn from his disciples before he kneeled down to pray (Luke xxii. 41); and the whole narrative, especially in regard to the closing scenes of his life, shows that he was accustomed to retire from the busy city to some secluded part of the Mount of Olives that he might be alone with God.

Now in regard to the Saviour's habits, we may remark that secret prayer with him was attended with all the difficulties which can ever exist in its performance. His professed followers often excuse themselves for neglecting it because they are away from home, and have no convenient place for retirement. Yet no small part of the Saviour's life was spent in travelling from place to place; and he had no home. We excuse ourselves because we find it difficult to retire from the gaze of man. But the Saviour was surrounded by multitudes who thronged his path; and he retired to the mountain that he might be alone with God. We excuse ourselves because we are oppressed with business and care, and because we have no time to pray. Yet the Saviour, with the burden of redeeming the world upon him, felt so much the importance of secret prayer that he rose up a great while before day that he might secure time for secret devotion. He was in a busy city; he was as incessantly occupied as we can be; he went from place to place as we often do, but he forgot not the duty of secret devotion, and he made it



a matter of plan and study and self-denial that he might be alone with God. Fellow professor! He had not a dwelling like yours where at any time he might secure a place of retirement for prayer. Amidst all the difficulties which can encircle our path *he* prayed in secret; and he left a standing rebuke of the idle and the slumbering by his rising a great while before day for prayer. Let me ask of his followers, whether it would not be as easy for them to anticipate the dawning of the morning to pray as it was for their self-denying Saviour? Should they urge as an excuse for neglecting this duty that they have no *time* to pray when they spend the time which the Saviour sought for prayer in needless sleep? When you feel disposed to urge this, let me entreat you to call to mind the image of the Son of God before the morning had shed a ray of light in the east, treading his lonely way to the mountain-side, that he might be alone with Him who hears prayer. Your redemption was sought by one who loved the devotions of the morning, and who denied himself of repose that you might be saved.

(3.) The duty of secret prayer is enforced by the fact that we have wants which can be presented before God in no other way. Our prayers in the sanctuary must be, to a great extent, such as will meet the common wants of the entire congregation; our prayers in the family, though not as general, yet will scarce allow a reference to the circumstances of individuals. We all have easily besetting sins; we have thoughts and feelings which cannot with propriety be made known to others; we have temptations which are peculiar to ourselves; and we have sadnesses, and sorrows, and fears, and trials of which others do not know, and which cannot be met by public prayer. A true Christian, moreover, will feel the necessity of more frequent communion with God than he can enjoy either in the family, the prayer-meeting, or the sanctuary. He will have desires and feelings which can be gratified only by prayer; and he will feel his need of grace and strength that can be imparted only by direct communion with God.

Yet I admit here, that the true question is rather one of privilege than of stern and iron-handed duty. The

enquiry is not so much whether I *ought*, as whether I *may* pray. I am a lost sinner; a tempted, and a dying man. I have a heart that is by nature full of evil. I am in a world where I am every moment liable to go astray; and the question is, whether I shall meet these temptations alone and single-handed, or whether I may go to a God of infinite power and grace and implore his aid? I am called to the discharge of great and arduous duties; and may I go to God and ask him to shine upon my understanding and my heart, and to furnish facilities for the discharge of those duties by the favoring events of his Providence? I am about to die, and my whole nature shrinks back at the word *death*. Shall I go to meet the king of terrors armed by the little philosophy which I can assume; and after all with no security that the dark valley will not be to me full of horrors, or may I now in the days of my health and strength go before God and ask him to prepare me for that dread hour, and secure his presence when I come to die? These are the questions to be asked on the subject of secret prayer; and if man has any right feelings, the answer to these questions cannot be difficult.

(4.) It is observable that the injunction on the subject of secret prayer does not specify the *times* when we are to pray. It does not say how often, nor at what time of the day, it is to be done. In this respect there is a strong resemblance between this command and that enjoining the observance of the Lord's supper. Both are to be voluntary services; and in regard to both, the time when the duty is to be performed is left to ourselves. This was evidently not without design; and the Saviour meant to accomplish what could not be accomplished had he specified the times when the duty was to be performed, or the length of the service. Mohammed undertook to regulate this matter. He enjoined prayer a certain number of times each day, and the consequence is a formal, and cold, and heartless, and ostentatious prostration of the body all over the regions where the religion of Islam has spread. Christ meant that his religion should be voluntary. It was to be the religion of the heart. It was to be sufficiently powerful to secure the proper observance of his laws without needless par-

ticularity. It was designed to be such that a test might be furnished daily of our love to him, and our readiness to obey him. It is like the expressions of confidence and affection which we expect in our children. We do not specify how often they shall come and ask for favors, or how often they shall be admitted to our society ;—we cherish such a feeling, and expect from them such confidence in us, that they may come to us at any and at all times in their perplexities ; and we rejoice far more in the voluntary expressions of their confidence in us than we could in any constrained and prescribed service. Our prayers to God are to be voluntary. Whether they are more or less frequent, will be determined by the strength or feebleness of our religion ; and there is not to ourselves a better test of our attachment to God than the voluntary and frequent tribute which we pay to him in our secret devotions. Christianity is freedom—the true freedom. In its duties we are not to be fettered by set rules and formal services, but are to follow the promptings of a renovated mind, and to yield a service that is to be a service of love. Yet there are some circumstances determined by the principles laid down in the Bible, and by experience, which may lead us in regard to the proper times and modes of performing this duty. They are such rules as would be desired by those anxious to know how they may most profitably engage in secret prayer ; and as I wish to be useful to those who are desirous of doing their duty, I shall proceed to consider these rules. This was my.

II. Second object. In the text but a single circumstance is mentioned. It is, that we are to go into our closet, and that we are to be alone, or to secure secresy. In illustrating this, I would call your attention to a few points suggested by the circumstances of the case, or by what is obviously proper.

(1.) There should, if possible, be *a place* to which we may retire where we may be alone with God. It was a custom among the Jews to prepare such a place in all their dwellings as an essential part of the arrangement of a house. There was with them, perhaps, somewhat of ostentation in this, but the principle was a good one ; and he who builds a house should secure some room where he



may retire alike from his family and from the world, and be alone with God. There are times in the lives of all men when they wish to be alone; there should be times every day when we should withdraw wholly from the world; and unless such a place of retirement can be secured, I see not that there can be the appropriate performance of this duty of secret prayer. To breathe forth a short and silent petition when lying in your bed, does not meet the case supposed by the Saviour, when we are to *enter into the closet, and shut the door, and pray*. With the Redeemer, a grove, a mountain, a garden, constituted such a place. Rather than forego it, he went before day to the mountain-side; he walked at deep night to the grove; he left the city, and sought out a garden where he might be alone. And we may as well do it as he. There need be no difficulty on this point. The love of secret prayer would create such places in abundance; and no one need pass a single day without securing retirement to pray to God. If there be not such a place, it is not difficult to foresee what will be the effect. There will be no regular secret prayer; as I fear there is not by many who are members of the Christian church.

(2.) There should be set times for secret devotion. It is true that the Saviour did not prescribe such times, but that does not make it improper that we should form rules by which to regulate our personal habits in this matter. When the times shall be; how numerous; or at what periods of the day, must be left, of course, to each individual. No one can give laws in religion where Christ has given none; and the whole arrangement must be one that is voluntary on our part. The reasons why there should be set times for secret devotion are almost too obvious to be specified. The world crowds hard upon us, and unless there is a time sacred to God in our estimation, it will all be stolen away by the cares of this life. We defer it, intending to secure time for the duty, but company, and care, and pleasure, and light-reading, steal away the hours, and the day glides on, and this duty is forgotten. Of all things, our religious duties are most easily crowded out of their place; and in not a few instances, it is to be feared, the duty of secret prayer is deferred from day to day, until the Sabbath is almost the



only period when there is even the form of secret devotion. If only on that day, I may remark also, it will be mere form, and will be most heartlessly done. He who suffers the week to be passed without secret devotion, will usually not find it difficult to devote the Sabbath morning hours to protracted slumbers, and the entire day to other matters than secret prayer. He does not mean *always* so to live; but day crowds on day, and week on week, and his prayers are of the briefest nature, and of the most heartless kind.

Some say they have no time for secret devotion. The men of the world *have* no time. Their hours are too much occupied with the important business of making money, and of dress, and pleasure, in the counting-room, and in the gay and brilliant party, to attend to such trifles as the soul's salvation, and to preparation for eternity. Nothing would be more unreasonable than to disturb so important purposes by asking them to devote their time to prayer. But I marvel that a professor of the religion of Christ should ever make this remark. For what do we live? Whose is our time? Who gave it to us? To what have we devoted our lives? What is the purpose for which we have a being? What is to be our employment for eternity? O, professing Christian, the Saviour would have taken some portion of that time which you now spend in needless sleep, for secret prayer. He would have anticipated the dawning of the morning, rather than forego this privilege. He would have taken some of that time which you spend in dress, or in business, or in plans pertaining to this life, rather than neglect this duty. I add that the Saviour would have taken some of those moments which you spend in conversation of no profit, rather than forego the privilege of secret prayer. Nor think that this would be lost time. "Since I began," said Dr. Payson when a student, "to beg God's blessing on my studies, I have done more in one week than in the whole year before." This accords, I apprehend, with the experience of all Christians. He who wishes for a clear head in pursuing business or study; for an understanding quick to perceive truth, and a memory attentive to retain it; for ability to spend his time profitably—not wasting his energies in fruitless pursuits,

nor exhausting them in profitless speculations, will not find the time lost that is spent in prayer to that God who made the understanding, and who can give it just views of the proper proportion and value of things. He who wishes in business or in study for a heart justly balanced and pure, estimating objects according to their real value, superior to temptation and allurements, will not find his time lost that is spent in seeking that a heavenly influence may reign in that heart, and that God would preside over and direct all its feelings.

(3.) In regard to the frequency of our secret devotions, without attempting to give rules where Christ has given none, I would observe that the following are among the seasons when a true Christian, desiring to maintain a steady walk with God, and to become as eminent in piety as possible, will regard it as a privilege to pray.

(a) In the morning—the early morning hour. So the Psalmist prayed: “I prevented,” that is, I anticipated “the dawning of the morning, and cried; I hoped in thy word.” Ps. cxix. 147. So the Saviour prayed—rising a great while before day. What more appropriate season for prayer? When just rising from a bed of repose, having been guarded through the silent watches of night, what more natural and appropriate than to go before God and render him thanks that the sleep has not been the sleep of death? When the light again shines upon a darkened world, what more appropriate than to go to the Great Source of light, and ask that he will shine upon our path? When we enter upon the duties, the trials, the toils of a new day, not knowing what shall befall us, what more proper than to commend ourselves to him who can guide our feet, and lead us in the way in which we should go? The sun which dawns upon you in the new day, may be the last that will ever rise to your eyes; the journey which you then enter upon may be the closing day’s journey of your life; and as that sun sinks in the west, your light may have gone out forever. How can a Christian answer it to his conscience and to God, to begin the day and offering no thanksgiving, and imploring no guidance? He will find it impossible, I believe, to lead a life of very devoted piety, who does not begin each day with God; and every man will find the peace, the purity

the usefulness, and the comforts of each day to be determined with almost unerring accuracy by the nature of his early communion with God.

(b) Not less appropriate is secret prayer in the evening. Our preservation through the day demands thanks. The possibility that we have sinned, even where we have aimed to do our duty, (compare Job i. 5;) the consciousness of our infirmity and error, makes it proper that we should seek pardoning mercy. About again to be locked in the embrace of sleep, "the kinsman of death;" to close our eyes with no assurance that they will be opened again till they are opened on the burning throne of God, what can be more appropriate than to commend ourselves to the fatherly care of Him "who never slumbers nor sleeps?" And how will that Christian answer it to conscience and to God who sleeps and wakes; who rises and retires to rest; who walks in the light of God's sun, and who is guarded by him in the shadows of his night, without any recognition of his hand?

(c) Equally proper is it to pray in time of perplexity and embarrassment. We all have secret troubles. Our way is hedged up. Our intellect is clouded, and our views of truth and duty are obscure. Deepening darkness settles on our path, and we know not what to do. Many such times will occur in each man's life; and they are appointed, among other reasons, to see whether we will then look to God. In the most dark and distressing season of the American revolution, the commander-in-chief of our armies was observed to retire each day to a grove in the vicinity of the camp. It was at the Valley Forge. A series of disasters had disheartened the army, and the sky was overcast with a deep cloud, and distress and anxiety pervaded the nation. The army was in want of the comforts and almost of the indispensable necessities of life, and disaffection was spreading in the camp. Curiosity prompted an individual to follow the commander-in-chief, and to observe him. The father of his country was seen on his knees, supplicating the God of hosts in secret prayer. With an anxious and a burdened mind; a mind conscious of its need of heavenly support and devotion, he went and rolled these mighty burdens upon



the arm of Jehovah. Who can tell how much the liberty of this nation is owing to the answer to the secret prayers of Washington at the Valley Forge? Or rather, who can doubt that that spot where he plead with God was a place as closely connected with American freedom as the Hall of Independence? So where difficulties cluster around us, and we are perplexed and embarrassed, shall we be ashamed to go and pour out our hearts before God? An ancient monarch, a distinguished warrior, and a most beautiful poet, as well as an eminently holy man, once used this language. "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles." Ps. xxxiv. 4. 7. 17. When such men have felt it a privilege to pray, shall we regard it as humiliating for us?

(d.) We should pray when we are beset with strong temptations. Who has not had such temptations, when sin seemed to have armed itself with all its power, and when it made an onset on his piety which he felt unable to resist? Then we should pray. It was at such a period that the Saviour prayed in the garden of Gethsemane; and he who is thus beset by the tempter should go and plead with God.

(e.) We should pray when the Holy Spirit prompts us to pray. I mean this. There are times in the life of a pious man when he desires communion with God. He feels just like praying. His mind and heart can be satisfied with nothing else. Prayer to him then is just as congenial as conversation with a beloved friend when his heart glows with love; as the society of father, mother, sister, wife or child is when the heart is full of attachment; as strains of sweet music are to the ear best attuned, and to the soul most filled with the love of harmony; as an exquisite poem is to a heart most enamoured with the Muses; as the most copious draughts from the fountains of Helicon are to the lover of classic scenes; nay, as the most delicious banquet to the hungry. It is then the element of being; the breath; the vital air. Such times there are in the life of every Christian; and such times should not be suffered to pass by unimproved,



They are the spring-times of our piety; favoring gales from heaven designed to waft us onward to a world of glory. He is the most eminent Christian who is most favored with such strong desires urging him to prayer. The heart then is full. The sun of glory shines with unusual splendor. No cloud intervenes. The Christian rises from the earth, and pants for glory. Nothing then will satisfy the mind but communion with God; and then we should pray: Christian, have you never felt such times, or is all this to you unintelligible language? Does it seem to savor of enthusiasm or mysticism? Has your mind never been pensive; have you never seen a deepening gloom coming over the world; have you never felt a growing distaste for the things of this life and the usual objects of pursuit; have you never felt your mind unusually pressed down with the condition of your unconverted relatives, your children, your partners in life, with the state of the church, and with the danger of perishing sinners? These were times when the Spirit of God prompted you to pray. Such feelings pervading a church constitute in fact the beginning of a revival of religion. Such feelings resisted are the resistance of the Holy Ghost; and such resistance, when it arises from the love of vanity, of gain, and of fashion causes that Spirit to depart, and leaves the church to the chilly shades of spiritual night.

III. I proposed in the third place to show what are the rewards and advantages of secret prayer. "And thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." I will just suggest a thought or two, and then close.

I might observe that the habit of secret prayer furnishes to ourselves the best test of piety. There is the least temptation to its performance from improper motives of all the duties of religion. A man may preach merely to be seen of men; for the same reason he may give largely to objects of benevolence; and for the same reason he may be abundant, and loud, and long in public prayer. Such men were the Pharisees. But no such motive can reign in the closet. And though, with hearts such as ours are, no one can doubt that there may be improper motives even there, yet no where else is there so

little danger of being influenced by improper motives as in that duty.

But what is meant by the "open reward" referred to by the Saviour? Not wealth; not honor; not a gorgeous retinue of servants; not a splendid equipage; not crowns and sceptres. These are not the rewards of piety. Perhaps he refers to such things as the following. That humble piety which you see in some very obscure Christian with half your advantages, with little of your learning, and with none of your wealth. You know not how to account for it that he enjoys and manifests so much more religion than you are able to do. It is the "open reward" of much secret prayer.—That power which you see others have to gain a victory over the world; to resist its bad influences, and to subdue their own passions. You wonder how they do it, and wonder why such a victory is not yours. It is the "open reward" of much secret prayer.—That calm and much subdued temper which you see in others; that superiority to passion and raging lusts; that equability of mind when provoked and injured. You wonder how other minds can be so calm while you are ruffled, and irritable, and excited, and revengeful. Their calmness and composure is the "open reward" of secret prayer.—That patience which others evince in trial; that meek and quiet resignation; that readiness to bear many sufferings and to bear them long, and that holy triumph on the bed of death which you often see, is the "open reward" of secret prayer. Your mind is disturbed. You dread to die. You have no resignation when you lose your friends, and when you lie on a bed of pain. The reason is plain. You have not prayed in secret as you should have done, and there is to you no "open reward" of secret prayer. In one word, that holy, humble, calm, submissive life; that life of cheerful piety, of self-denial, and of practical benevolence; and that resigned and peaceful death which you often see in others, is the "open reward" of secret prayer. But further still. In the great day, when light shall blaze over countless millions assembled before God revealing all things, then the bright crown of glory which God the Father shall place on the head of the humble Christian, shall be the "open reward" of secret prayer.

## REMARKS.

1. It remains only to ask of you who bear the name of Christ, whether you are in all honesty and good conscience obeying the command of Jesus Christ? Here, every individual must act and answer for himself. No one can know your habits on this subject but yourselves and God. Yourself and God too are those most interested in knowing; and I may add your habits on this subject *are* known both to yourselves and to God. *You* know whether in all good conscience you are in the habit of entering into your closet and praying to your Father who is in secret, and God knows whether this is habitually done. O should his hand slowly pencil on these walls in letters of living light the names of those who *He* knows do *not* pray, how many names of professing Christians would stand thus revealed? My hearer, I hold it to be an indisputable truth that the man who does not in all fidelity pray in secret cannot be a Christian; and further, that the best evidence of your personal piety is not your attendance on the sanctuary—which in itself is no evidence; nor in celebrating the Lord's supper—which in itself is no evidence; nor in much alms-giving—which in itself is no evidence; but in that conscious love to God and to Jesus Christ which prompts you to pray to him who sees in secret. I may ask you then, whether you pray in secret? If you do, I may ask farther, what is the character of your prayers there? Are they infrequent, short, rapid, hurried, without heart, or feeling, or care; are they set and formal, hollow and insincere;—or are they the breathings of a heart that loves to pray, and that cannot but call upon God?

2. Finally, I would address one word to another interesting class of my audience. I allude to those who were early taught to pray, but who have now no "closet;" no secret place where they retire; no daily communion with God. Light returns to you in the morning, but not to you returns the secret wish to go and thank your Great Preserver. Night throws his shades around you and you lie down—perhaps to sleep the sleep of death, and you

commend not yourself to his fatherly care. Troubles come, and temptations arise, and disappointments thicken, but none of all your troubles has power to induce you to go to God and cast your care upon him. You see days, and weeks, and years roll away, and the judgment lessens its distance each moment, and death, "king of terrors," draws nearer, and still you do not pray. Once you prayed. Your mother taught you to kneel before your Maker, and put your little hands together, and say, "Our Father who art in heaven." But that mother may now slumber beneath the clods of the valley, or immersed in the business or the gaiety of the world you have forgotten her counsel, and now live without prayer. A traveller to eternity; a dependent being; a sinner; with a soul that can never die, you are going to the grave, and you seek not your Maker's blessing; you ask not his guidance and his salvation. Let me entreat of you one thing. It is to resume that forgotten-habit of secret prayer. Go once to-day, if it be the last time, and ask of God to save you. Go and seek the face of your long-forgotten God. Let it be, if you will it should be so, the last time. Enter the closet with this feeling—"This is the last time that I shall call upon God?" Yet let it *once* be done. Stand not, I conjure you, at the bar of God with this feeling, 'I asked not to be saved. I sought not to enter into heaven.' Turn not away from the gates of glory at the close of the scenes of the judgment, with this feeling, 'I go to a world of wo from which I did not ask to be delivered; to everlasting despair, to be saved from which I raised not a feeble cry.' Sinner, pray! Deathless being, pray! Aged man, soon to go to the judgment, pray! Young man, amidst the snares of the world and the temptations of this life, I entreat you to pray! Child of pious parents, baptized in the Saviour's name, pray! O pray, ye travellers to eternity; pray that you may enter into the kingdom of God!



## SERMON IX.

### THE SABBATH

Ex. xx. 8. Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.

THE Sabbath may be contemplated from many different points of view. It may be considered in its influence on the powers of our nature exhausted through six days of anxiety and toil; in the necessity which is laid in our very constitution by the Author of our being for periodical seasons of relaxation and repose; in its influence on the intellect of an individual or a people by its directing the attention to topics adapted to elevate and expand the soul; in the aid which it furnishes to the magistrate in promoting the observance of law; in its influence on neighbourhoods and families in promoting social feeling, and refined intercourse; in its bearing on the civil liberties of a nation, and in its indispensable necessity in preparing for the life to come. Each one of these points would furnish an ample topic of discourse; and by the arguments which might be accumulated on these topics we could satisfy any reasonable mind of the value and importance of the Sabbath. But I wish at this time to present a different train of thought from what would be furnished by either of these points. I design particularly to address Christians; and to urge upon their minds some considerations why they should feel a special interest in the proper observance of this day.

I. The first consideration which I shall suggest is, that if the Sabbath is abolished, the Christian religion will be abolished with it. The question whether this day is to be observed or desecrated, is just a question of life and death in regard to Christianity. This is so obvious that it scarcely needs any attempt to prove it. Without a Sabbath our public institutions designed to promote and perpetuate religion would cease; our Sabbath-schools would be disbanded; family instruction would soon come to an end; the sanctuaries would be closed; the ministry

dismissed and discarded; the current of worldly affairs would be unbroken; plans of evil would meet with no interruption; and all the means of grace would be at once arrested. Christians might meet at irregular and distant intervals for prayer and praise; but the number of such meetings would rapidly decrease, and soon the last vestige of Christianity would disappear. The books containing its defence would be forgotten, and the Bible soon cease to be read with interest or gratitude. If the Sabbath be abolished, what hold can Christianity have on man? What way of access can it have to the heart and conscience? How shall the arguments for its truth be brought before the mind? How shall its moral precepts be urged? How shall its high hopes, and its solemn appeals and sanctions be presented? And how shall its stern rebukes be made to fall on the ears of the guilty? If you close your churches, and your Sabbath-schools, there is no other effectual way. Nothing can be plainer than this; and nothing can be more manifest than that he who violates, or disregards the Sabbath, is taking the most effectual means for obliterating the Christian religion from the world.

The whole history of Christianity shows that where the Sabbath is observed religion flourishes; where it is not, religion dies away and becomes extinct. We might appeal here to any man's observation, and ask him to recall the memory of a place where there is no Sabbath, and the scenes which he witnessed there. Was the voice of prayer heard there? Was God feared and honored? Were children and youth trained in the ways of religion, and taught to worship and honor their Maker? Did meekness, and temperance, and chastity, and justice, and honesty abound? Or was the place distinguished for riot and disorder; for falsehood and profaneness; for intemperance and licentiousness; for indolence and brutal scenes of violence and strife? Was there ever a place in which the Sabbath began to be observed in which there did not revive the love of truth and order; industry and intelligence; urbanity and benevolence; temperance, purity, and the love of God—like streams breaking out in the desert, and like the lily and the rose springing up in waste and sandy places! Has there ever been

an instance where this day has been observed, that it has not been followed by the blessings which industry, and temperance, and intelligence, and piety carry in their train? This appeal is made with the utmost confidence; and the friends and foes of Christianity are invited to examine the point at their leisure.

Well do the enemies of Christianity in these times, know what they are about. In former generations, attempts were made to destroy the gospel by the sword and the faggot;—but all such attempts were foiled. Imperial power attempted to crush it; but imperial power found its arm too weak to contend with God. Argument and sophistry were then employed; ridicule lent its aid, and contempt pointed the finger of scorn; but all was in vain. Christianity survived all these, and rose with augmented power and more resplendent beauty—and would do so to the end of time. But there is one weapon which the enemy has employed to destroy Christianity, and to drive it from the world, which has never been employed but with signal success. It is the attempt to corrupt the Christian Sabbath; to make it a day of festivity; to cause Christians to feel that its sacred and rigid obligation has ceased; to induce them on that day to mingle in the scenes of pleasure, or the exciting plans of ambition;—to make them feel that they may pursue their journeys by land and water—by the steam boat and the car regardless of the command of God; and this has done, and will continue to do, what no argument, no sophistry, no imperial power has been able to accomplish. The “Book of Sports” did more to destroy Christianity than all the ten persecutions of the Roman emperors; and the views of the second Charles and his court about the Lord’s day, tended more to drive religion from the British nation than all the fires that were enkindled by Mary. Paris has no Sabbath, and that fact has done more to banish Christianity than all the writing of Voltaire; and Vienna has no Sabbath, and that fact does more to annihilate religion there than ever did the scepticism of Frederick. Turn the Sabbath into a day of sports and pastime; of military reviews, and of pantomimes and theatrical exhibitions, and not an infidel any where would care a farthing about

the tomes of Volney or Voltaire ; about the scepticism of Hume, the sneers of Gibbon, or the scurrility of Paine.

The great enemy of God and liberty, in this western world, understands how to meet Christianity here. He knows that it will not be possible to kindle the flames of persecution. He knows that the friends of Christ cannot be turned over by the sentence of the Inquisition to the tender mercies of the civil arm. He knows that he cannot get up an *auto-de-fe*, and that the garden of the capitol cannot be illuminated by the burning bodies of the saints. He knows too that there is too much science and learning ; that there are too many schools and colleges, to attempt to attack it by sophistry and argument. It has passed through too many such trials, and has come out of them all unscathed. But was there no new form of opposition by which religion could be met in the new world ; no vital part of Christianity that could be reached ; no blow that could be struck that would wither its rising power, and lay it prostrate in the dust ? There was one experiment that could be made. Over these broad and ample states and territories men might be sent in search of gain, regardless of the Sabbath. Our majestic streams—winding along for thousands of miles through the richest lands on earth—might be ascended regardless of the sacredness of the day. Young men might be led away, by the hope of wealth, from the peaceful scenes where a Sabbath sheds repose on a village, or the Sabbath bell summons an entire population to worship God. The nation might be roused by the love of gold ; and new facilities for intercourse, and the love of travel might unsettle almost the whole population, and transform them into wandering tribes or families, and lead them to trample down the barriers of virtue, and the institutions of religion. The experiment was one of vast moment, and as fearful in its results as it was vast. It involves the whole interest of this nation. Its result will settle the fate of Christianity in this land, and perhaps throughout the world. If we can have a Sabbath, sacred in its stillness and its associations ; maintained by a healthful popular sentiment rather than by human laws ; revered as a day of holy rest, and as a type of heaven ; a day when men shall delight to



come together to worship God, and not a day of pastime, Christianity is safe in this land, and our country is safe. If not, the Sabbath, and religion, and liberty will die together.

In the experiment going on in this land not few hands are engaged but many. It is not the mere work of thoughtlessness and recklessness, but it has all the marks of purpose and of plan. It has evidence of being under the control of that master mind that is the author of all evil, and the father of all the embarrassments that Christianity has ever met with. The attempt to blot out the Sabbath from this land evinces more knowledge of human nature, and more tact and skill than the persecutions of the Roman emperors or of Mary. For who is engaged in the work of blotting out the Sabbath? Every atheist is engaged in it, and here places his main hope of success. Every sceptic is engaged in it, and anticipates more from this than from all his arguments. Every profane man, and every intemperate man, and every licentious man is engaged in it, for in this way they hope that all restraint will be removed from unlimited indulgence in vice. And a multitude of men who are not professedly atheists or infidels, but whose heart is with them in their leading purposes, unite with them in opposing the sacredness of this day. In one word, the mass of busy, active, unprincipled, infidel mind in this nation, in high life and low, in office and out of office, in city and country, that for various reasons would desire Christianity to be extinguished, has made war on the Sabbath, and is prosecuting that war by all the means within its reach, and, it is to be feared, with augmenting prospects of success.

The question now is just this. Is Christianity worth preserving, or can we afford to see it driven from the land? Are we so secure without it in our individual and national interests, that we can part with it without regret; or is it with an effort to save it? Has Christianity such a connection with pure and wholesome morals as to make it desirable to retain it in the commonwealth, or will our morals be equally pure without it? Can this great nation be governed and defended without a God, or will it be best to yield obedience to his laws, and retain the religion of "peace and good will toward men"

among us, and transmit it to posterity? These are questions connected with the Sabbath; and the course which is pursued in regard to this day will settle them all.

II. The second reason why this subject demands now the special attention of Christians is, that if the Sabbath is not regarded as holy time, it will be regarded as pastime; if not a day sacred to devotion, it will be a day of recreation, of pleasure, of licentiousness. The Sabbath is not essentially an arbitrary appointment, for it is required in the very nature of the animal economy that there should be periodical seasons of relaxation. Nature cannot always be taxed to incessant effort. We *must* have periodical rest in all the functions of our nature. Bonaparte once passed three entire days and nights without sleep, but he could no longer contend against a great law of nature, and sank to sleep on his horse. There is not a muscle in the animal economy that does not demand rest after effort, and that will not have it. If it is not granted voluntarily, it will be taken. If the powers of nature are overworked, they will take relaxation by disease, and perhaps when too late to repair their exhausted energies. This great law of nature must and will be obeyed. If the frame is worn out and exhausted without this relaxation, the consequence must be sickness, or rest in the grave. The late Mr. Wilberforce declared that at one period of his parliamentary career, his duties were so multiplied and exhausting that his health must have been utterly prostrated, but for the seasonable relief which the Sabbath afforded him. There is not an animal that can endure unceasing effort without repose; and God, in requiring that the "cattle" should be allowed to rest on the Sabbath, has spoken according to the laws which he originally impressed on the brute creation. If the question were simply one of interest, and a man wished to make the most of the noble horse or the patient ox, he would allow him to rest according to the commandment. For every such day of periodical repose he will receive more than an equivalent in augmented strength and length of days. If rest is not allowed them, their powers are exhausted, and they expire. The universe is fitted up, as far as we know, for the purposes of alternate action and rest, from the first beating of the

heart in infancy to the mightiest effort of the mature man; from the insect that flutters and dies, to the lion of the forest, the mighty elephant, and the monarch on the throne.

In demanding, therefore, that the animal and mental economy should be allowed a day of periodical repose, God has acted in accordance with a great law of nature. There is nothing arbitrary, except in designating the particular day which shall be observed; and all that is arbitrary in this is a consultation of convenience, that we may not be disturbed by the toil and action of another while we seek repose—just as he has so ordained the animal functions that all are disposed to sleep at night.

Further, all nations have had, and will have periodical seasons of relaxation from the severity of toil. The Jews had their weekly Sabbath; the Greeks and Romans had numerous festivals in honor of their gods, and many a day in the year for riot and disorder; the followers of Mohammed observe a weekly Sabbath; the heathen nations observe numerous festivals frequently occurring; and even the actors in the French revolution were constrained to bow to this great law of nature, and appointed one day in ten as a day of relaxation from toil. Hesiod and Homer said, "The seventh day is holy." Josephus says, "There is no city, however barbarous, where the custom of observing the seventh day which prevails among the Jews is not observed." Eusebius says, "Almost all the philosophers and the poets acknowledge the seventh day as holy."\* Whatever may be the time selected, whether a day in honor of an idol, or in honor of the Saviour; whether one day in seven, or one day in ten; whether it be in honor of a saint, a hero, or the birth-day of a prince or of a nation, such days *will* be observed. In our country it is settled that this day of periodical rest is to be the first day of the week. This is settled by custom; by the statutes of the land; by the practices in courts and legislatures; by universal understanding among farmers and mechanics; by the established laws and habits in our colleges and schools, between the master and the slave, and among neighbors

\* Grotius de Veritate. Lib. 1. sec. xvi.



every where. No one expects to find his neighbor at work on the Sabbath ; and should even a master attempt to *enforce* labor on the Sabbath, he would go against the moral sense of the nation, and against the settled customs of the land. This custom is settled, moreover, by the belief of the religious portion of the nation that this is holy time, and by the lingerings of conscience among those who have been trained in the ways of religion. It is to be the settled custom in this nation that on this day toil is to cease, and men are to give themselves to other purposes than the ordinary employments of life. As a general habit all over the land, our stores and counting-houses will be shut ; our schools will be disbanded ; our courts and public offices will be closed ; our banks and insurance offices will cease to do business ; our mechanics will lay aside the saw and the hammer ; the student will close his books, the farmer will leave his plow in the furrow, the woodman will lay down his axe, the apprentice will be at liberty, and the slave will feel that he has a little time that in some proper sense is his own. The day is to be a day of relaxation and rest. It is either to be devoted to religion, or to such pastimes as the general public sentiment shall demand.

Since this is to be so, the question is, what is to be the effect if the day ceases to be a day of religious observance ? What will be the effect of releasing a population of several millions one-seventh part of the time from any settled business of life ? What will be the result if they are brought under no religious instruction ? What will be the effect on morals ; on religion ; on sober habits of industry ; on virtue, happiness, and patriotism ? Can we safely close our places of business, and annihilate all the restraints that bind us during the six days ; can we turn out a vast population of the young with nothing to do, and abide the consequences of such a universal exposure to vice ? Can we safely dismiss our young men, all over the land, with sentiments unsettled, and with habits of virtue unformed, and throw them one day in seven upon the world with nothing to do ? Can we safely release our sons, and our apprentices, and our clerks from our employ, and send them forth under the influence of unchecked youthful passion ? Can we safely open, as we do, fountains of



poison at every corner of the street, and in every village and hamlet, and invite the young to drink there with impunity? Can there be a season of universal relaxation, occurring fifty-two times in a year, when all restraints are withdrawn, and when the power of temptation shall be plied with all that art and skill can do to lead the hosts in the way to ruin, and to drag them down to hell?

One would suppose that the experiment which has already been made in cities of our land, would be sufficient to remove all doubt from every reasonable mind on this subject. We are making the experiment on a large scale every Sabbath. Extensively in our large cities and their vicinities, this is a day of dissipation, of riot, of licentiousness, and of blasphemy. It is probable that more is done to unsettle the habits of virtue, and soberness, and industry; to propagate infidelity, and to lay the foundation for future repentance or ignominy; to retard the progress of the temperance reformation, and to prepare candidates for the penitentiary and the gallows on this day than on all the other days of the week. So it always is where institutions designed for good are abused. They become as powerful in evil as they were intended to be for good. The Sabbath is an institution of tremendous power for good or evil. If for good, as it is designed, and as it easily may be, it is laid at the foundation of all our peace, our intelligence, our morals, our religion. If for evil, it strikes at all these; nor is there any possible power in laws or in education that can, during the six days, counteract the evils of a Sabbath given to licentiousness and sin. And the question before the nation is not, whether this is to be a day of labor and sober industry, for that is settled, but whether it is to be a day of religion or licentiousness; a day of virtue or of sin; a day for God, or a day for the devil. It is, whether the nation can *afford* to have one day in seven a day of riot and disorder—a *saturnalia*, occurring more than fifty times in the year, when Rome, in the most palmy days of her virtue, could scarcely survive the effects of one. No graver question can come before the nation than this. Let any one ask himself what would be the effect of having a day kept as the anniversary of our independence has usually been, occurring more than fifty

times in the year—a day of riot and drunkenness—and he can be at no loss what answer is to be given to such a question.

Further, the Sabbath is favorable to the spread of pure morality, and the most pure and elevated virtues are found in those communities that observe it as a day of holy rest. This assertion is made with the utmost confidence, and you are invited to test the truth of it as often as you please. Go through the country and examine the cities, the towns, and the villages; mingle with the inhabitants of every class, and converse with them freely; learn their opinions and their habits; examine their prisons and their almshouses, and then tell me where you find most industry, most sober habits, most contentment, most sobriety, most intelligence, most freedom from low and debasing vices. Tell me in what place you would prefer to place a son, or where you would wish a daughter to be educated? Is there here a parent who would hesitate for one moment in regard to this? The virtues which go to adorn domestic intercourse, and to cement society; the mild and gentle charities that are connected with the fireside, with the sick-room, and the bed of death, flourish pre-eminently among those who love the sound of the Sabbath-bell. Can you point me to one idle and dissolute family; to one disturber of the peace; to one vicious neighborhood; to one community in which licentiousness reigns, where the Sabbath is habitually and generally observed? And can you point me to one community where it is not observed, which does not become riotous and vicious, and where intemperance, and gambling, and licentiousness, do not sooner or later abound? Sir Matthew Hale says, "That of all the persons convicted of capital crimes while he was on the bench, there were few who were not ready to confess that they had begun their career of wickedness by a neglect of the duties of the Sabbath."

Now if the Sabbath be abolished, it will become a day of immorality. In particular, I wish to say, that this remark specially concerns young men. I do believe that if I could collect around me all the young men of this land, and if I could get their ear for a little time, I could convince the mass of them that the only security for their

correct moral character, and their future usefulness, success, and happiness, will be connected with the proper observance of this day. I could show them, to their perfect satisfaction, that the temptations which are spread out to beguile the unwary, are designed by cunning, unprincipled, and avaricious men for them. I could satisfy them that when they go forth from their father's dwellings, and from the sanctuary this day, under the influence of strong desires for pleasure and amusement, they are exposed to temptations where no young man is safe, and that beyond the eye of a father and a mother they may be hurried on to excesses which they would have been shocked to have anticipated. For be it remembered that no young man leaves his father's dwelling, and devotes this day to amusement and revelry, without flying in the face of an explicit command of the Most High. He tramples beneath his feet one of the solemn mandates that were given amidst flames and thunders on Mount Sinai—and when one command of God is basely and contemptuously trod beneath his feet the other nine will soon cease to be regarded. Be it remembered too, that the laws which God has ordained tend only to promote human virtue and happiness. Go to the penitentiary, and walk along from cell to cell, and enquire of the inmates *when* their career of guilt commenced. Go and converse in his sober moments with the drunkard, and ask him when he first trod that downward way, and the answer would be, in a majority of cases, on the Sabbath-day. I venture here a remark—though with not entire certainty of its correctness. It is, that in this country more young men commence the habits of drinking on the Sabbath than on any other day in the week. They are at leisure. They band together. They fill up the long lines of packed vehicles that on that day lead out of our cities in every direction. At the end of each one of those brief journies, and at as many places on the way as they can be induced to pause at, a kind and indulgent public has placed a dram shop, under the name of a tavern, and the Sabbath is their harvest-time, and were it not for the Sabbath they could not be sustained a month. There, many a young man in thoughtlessness commences a career which terminates in breaking a mother's heart, and in the early wreck of



all the hopes of a family, and in the extinction of their peace as they weep over a drunkard's grave.

III. A third reason why this subject demands the attention of Christians in a special manner now is, that there is a state of things in this land that is tending to obliterate the Sabbath altogether.

The events to which I refer are too well known to make it necessary to dwell particularly on them. In every direction the mail is carried, and the example of the violation of the day is thus set by national authority. Every post-office is required by law to be kept open, and a public invitation is thus given to obtain the political and commercial intelligence, and to divert the mind from the sacred duties of the day by the reference to the cares of this life. Some years since the voice of respectful entreaty and petition was addressed to the National Legislature by some thousands of the best citizens in the land;—and the sacred right of petition was met with contempt and sarcasm. In every part of our land, also; the facilities for intercommunication have been augmented to an extent that excites the surprise of the world. By canals and rail-roads distant portions of our country have been brought together, and the land trembles as the car of commerce rolls on, and the long lines of majestic improvements are crowded with the results of our toil, and with a travelling community. Against these national improvements, assuredly, the language of complaint is not to be urged. In many respects they are the glory of our land; and they should be sources of gratitude to God who has thus signally blessed our country. But can any one be ignorant that each canal and rail-road furnishes increased facility for Sabbath-violation, and that they are fast tending to blot it from the land? Where in these public conveyances is the Sabbath regarded? Where is the rail-road car that is arrested by the return of this day? Is it not known that these vehicles, and particularly in the neighborhood of our cities, are crowded with a denser throng on this day than on any other day in the seven? Had it been the purpose of the people of this land to abolish the Sabbath altogether, and to furnish the most rapid and extended means of its entire obliteration, it



would have been impossible to have devised a more certain and effectual way than that which is now employed.

In the mean time there is an augmenting desire for *motion* in this land. The population is becoming migratory; and few pause—whether Christians or not—to rest on the Sabbath. The merchant hastens on his way to the commercial emporium—as if the saving of a day for worldly business were of more value than the observance of the laws of God; the legislator pursues his journey to the capitol—as if anxious to exhibit a specimen of breaking the laws of God while he goes to make laws for man;—the party of pleasure urge on their way to a watering-place—determined to annihilate time and space, as if the affairs of the world depended on their being there an hour earlier; our sons in the distant west are travelling at the same time beyond the sound of the Sabbath-bell, and the memory of the sanctuary to which it once called them—as if it were a virtue to forget all the sacred scenes where the calm light of a Sabbath-morning visited their souls; and the idle, the dissipated, the profane, the atheist, the Christian, the clergyman, in these public vehicles, pursue the business of gain, or pleasure, or convenience, or ambition—as if there were special merit in forgetting all the usual distinctions of society, and each and all were showing how they can most effectually disregard the obligations of this day. For one man in the community at large who will conscientiously stop on his journey to keep holy the Sabbath-day, there are probably ten who will be at special pains to violate it, either by commencing a journey on that day, or by making it the occasion of an excursion of pleasure. In the high places of the land too there is an increasing laxness of principle on this subject. During the times that tried men's souls in the war of Independence, our fathers would have been alarmed had the ordinary business of legislation been pursued on the Sabbath, and the voice of indignant remonstrance would have been heard throughout the land. Yet nothing has been more common of late years than for the National Legislature, after wasting months in needless and profitless debate, to close their labors on the Sabbath—and amidst such scenes of disorder as to be a disgrace to themselves and the nation on any day.—

It is not easy for men in any situation to cast off respect for the laws of God and at the same time maintain a character for sober virtue and order; and in legislatures as elsewhere a disregard for God's laws is but the beginning of evil. Yet the nation has not been alarmed. A few feeble voices from the press have been heard, but they have died away; and the nation seems resolved to acquiesce in the insult put upon the religious sentiments of the great body of the people of the land, and in the disregard of the nation in its highest functions for the Sabbath of the Lord.

I will close by repeating a remark already made. It is this. The warfare which Christianity is to wage in this land is here. The opposition to religion is here. The Sabbath has more enemies in this land than the Lord's Supper; than baptism; than the Bible; than all the other institutions of religion put together. At the same time it is more difficult to meet the enemy here than any where else—for we come in conflict not with argument—but with interest, and pleasure, and the love of indulgence, and of gain. The conflict is to rage here. The wish of the atheist, the infidel, the man of vice, is to blot out the Sabbath. The attempt will not be made here to destroy Christianity by persecution, for that has been often tried, and has always failed. It is to see whether the Sabbath can be obliterated from the memory of man; and if it *can* be done it will be done. If this day, with its sacred institutions, can be blotted out, the victory will be won. Infidelity will achieve what the faggot and the stake, the force of argument and the caustic severity of sarcasm and ridicule have never been able to accomplish. And it is just now a question for the good people of this land to determine for themselves whether they shall abandon the day, or make an effort to save it; whether the virtuous and the pious shall yield the victory without a struggle, or whether they shall combine their efforts, and address the reason and conscience of their fellow-citizens and speak to them of our hallowed institutions, and of the rapid corruption of the public morals; whether they shall remind them of what the Sabbath has done for us in better times, and attempt to bring back the nation to the observance of an institu-

tion that would diffuse intelligence, and soberness, and industry, and salvation all over the land ; or whether disheartened by the difficulties in the case, and overpowered by numbers, they shall give it up in despair. On the position which each individual takes on these questions, more may depend than on any other single step in his life ; on his course in regard to the Sabbath will depend much of the peace or the sorrow of the bed of death.

## SERMON XX.

### SECRET FAULTS.

Psalm xix. 12. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.

**SECRET FAULTS.**—Men are usually much less anxious to be free from them than they are to be restrained from open transgression. Yet, they enter deeply into the character, and will enter into the future judgment. It is important, therefore, that we should understand our own secret propensities to evil; and important that we should urge, with fervor and sincerity, the petition of the text, “Cleanse thou me from secret faults.”

The following points will be considered in illustrating this subject:

- I. What are secret faults;
- II. By what means they are concealed; and,
- III. Why should we desire and pray to be delivered from them?

I. What are secret faults? They stand opposed to open and “presumptuous transgressions;” to such as are seen and known by the world. They pertain to the motives, the feelings, the intentions of the heart. They relate particularly to such sins as the following:

(1.) To the secret bias of the heart to evil. There may be what may be called latent guilt; a propensity of the soul to sin which has never been developed, and of which, except in the feeblest degree, we may be scarcely conscious ourselves. Many a parent is surprised to see his son, in some new situation in life, evince a propensity to some form of vice which he had never suspected. The reason was, that he was not before placed in a situation to develop the peculiar depravity of his heart. Many a man discovers a propensity to evil suddenly springing up in his own soul, which is equally surprising to himself and to his friends. To his own amazement, he finds himself suddenly growing covetous, or ambitious, or proud, and



wonders at the extraordinary power which the apparently new-born propensity has over his mind. The reason is, that the strong native inclination of his soul has not before been in circumstances to develop itself. It has been held in check and abeyance, and no opportunity has occurred where he could act out his nature. No man knows what latent propensities to evil there may be in the soul, until he has been thrown into a variety of circumstances fitted to test his character, and show him what he is. The human heart is a great deep. No line has been found long enough to sound it; and as it is in regard to the bottom of the ocean, so no one has fully told us what lies buried in the depths of the soul of man.

(2.) Secret faults consist of the unholy thoughts which we intend no other person shall know. Some of those are usually of so gross a character, that the great body of persons at once reject them, and strive to be free from them. But others are such as the mind indulges in, with little effort to remove them, and with little sense of their evil. They go materially into the formation of the character as it is seen by God, and as it is ultimately developed before men, but they are often long indulged before there is any very decided effort to remove them, or any very deep conviction that they are evil. Most unconverted minds are in the habit of indulging in trains of thought which they would by no means be willing that the world should know of, and not a few such thoughts are suffered to pass through the minds of those who are professedly of pure life, which they are anxious to conceal from their fellow-men. Few, indeed, are the hearts that would bear the revolution of its workings for a single day without exciting a blush; and few are the inhabitants of this world, if there are any, who would be willing that their secret views, and thoughts, and plans, for any considerable period of their lives, should be laid open before their best friends.

(3.) Secret faults are those sinful emotions and affections which rise up in the best hearts almost involuntarily, and against which a mind wishing to be pure struggles. They are the operations of a nature deeply depraved. They are the streams that flow forth from the corrupt fountain, the heart. They are the result of former habits

of thinking, and of the former course of life. There is much in habit, whether for good or evil, which we cannot understand. Essentially we mean by it the facility for doing any thing which results from having often done it; and when once a man has acquired the habit of sinning, it will follow him and annoy him until contrary habits are formed. A man who has been in the habit of profaneness, will long after find the words of blasphemy rising in his mind almost involuntarily and irresistibly. He who has been an infidel, will find infidel thoughts and associations torturing his peace for years after he becomes a true Christian. He who has been proud, and irritable, and selfish, and stubborn, and self-confident, and fault-finding, and censorious before his conversion, will find a constant tendency to these sins afterwards, and will detect himself in their indulgence almost before he is aware of it. He who was covetous or avaricious before his conversion, will find the mighty remains of these sins in his heart after he becomes a Christian, and will be subjected to their secret operation, even when his general course of life is that of a man of benevolence. We are beset with two classes of evils—there is the evil of our original bias to transgress—the powerful tendency with which we came into the world; and there is the evil arising from long indulgence in habits of sin. He who commences the Christian life in youth, will have the least trouble from either of these sources; he who is converted at middle or advanced life must expect a furious warfare that shall cease only at death.

(4.) Secret faults include those plans of evil which are not prosecuted to their completion. They are formed, and there is an intention of executing them, but the opportunity does not occur; or some unexpected barrier is thrown in the way; or the heart fails; or death breaks up the scheme. Of all the plans of evil that have been formed on earth, but a small proportion have ever been executed; and great as is the aggregate of iniquity, the amount would have been much more vast if all the purposes of wickedness had been accomplished as was desired by their projectors. Bad as the world is, and much occasion as there is to mourn over it, yet but little of the evil that has in fact existed has appeared to any but

to the all-seeing eye of God. This is one reason why *his* estimate of the human character in the Bible, seems to be so much more severe than that which men form. He looks upon the heart; sees all the unexecuted plans of evil; knows what man *would* do if he were unrestrained; and forms his view of the human character from what he sees in the secret chambers of the soul, and will judge men according to that.

In speaking of secret faults, I might go on to speak of the crimes that are perpetrated in darkness; of those which escape the eye of the most vigilant police; of those which have been committed and which are forgotten; and of those which are perpetrated under the specious name of virtue, and which pass for virtue among men. But the enumeration already given will furnish an idea of what I mean, and will prepare the way for considering the propriety of prayer for deliverance from them in another part of this discourse. I proceed, therefore, to show,

II. In the second place, some of the ways in which sins concealed, or in which our faults are hid from detection, so that they remain unknown to others.

(1.) I begin with observing that men design to conceal them. A power to hide our purposes is essential to the existence of society, and grows out of its very organization. The body becomes the shield of the soul to guard our plans from the observation of other minds, and to bury our thoughts from the notice of all but the Omniscient Eye. It becomes a right which every man has, to conceal those of his plans in his own bosom which he is unwilling the world should know. This power we hold for good. It is essential often to the accomplishment of our virtuous purposes, which would be defeated if we could not hide them from others; it is vital to the performance of contemplated deeds of benevolence—for if the wicked could see them they would often defeat them. It constitutes individuality in the midst of society, that we are known only so far as we wish to be known; and that we may walk among thousands and be the depositories of our own secrets, and keep our individual aims hidden from the world.

The power of concealment is, therefore, originally an



arrangement for good. But it may be abused for purposes of evil; and my observation now is, that a large part of the plans of wickedness in this world are concealed of design. There is a course of discipline in vice to accomplish this, and it is often successful. God has placed in the human frame by nature certain indications of secret guilt; and he meant that where that guilt existed it should betray itself for the well-being of society. He designed not only that the conscience should check the offender, but he implanted in the frame itself, certain indications of guilt which he intended also to be a safeguard of virtue. The blushing cheek—the mysterious rush of blood there which no man can account for except on the supposition that there is a moral government and a God—he intended should be an index of guilt—and in a novice in iniquity it is so. The eye—tremulous, and abashed, and turning away—he intended should betray the secret wickedness of the soul—a fact also which no one can account for except on the supposition that there is a God. The trembling frame, the hand palsied by the consciousness of crime when raised to commit a deed of wickedness, he designed should reveal the guilty purpose of the soul. See a brow calm, and an eye serene, and a frame composed, and a hand steady, and a walk erect and firm, and you are struck with the indications of conscious innocence. The reverse indicates guilt. Now, one great art in this world is to obliterate the natural marks of guilt from the human frame, and to counterfeit the indications of innocence. The object is so to train the eye that it will not reveal the secret conviction of crime; so to discipline the cheek that it will betray the guilty by a sudden rush of blood there; so to fortify the hand and the frame that they will not by trembling disclose the purposes of the soul. One of the first lessons which the guilty attempt to learn is this; a lesson most difficult, and yet sometimes learned with great skill. That young man when he leaves his father's house to go to the theatre or to the gambling room, or to associate with the vile, begins at once to study how he may control his eye and his cheek, as well as his words, in such a manner that they will not betray him. —Nature would reveal the deed as soon as he comes into the presence of his father or mother, if he would allow



her to speak out ; but he wishes to put on the appearance of innocence, and to be able to tell a lie as if it were the truth. That young man when he first pilfers the drawer of his employer, would betray the act the next moment if he were to allow nature to speak out, and did not put the eye and the cheek under discipline that they should not betray him. That man who has commenced a career of fraud and villany ; who abuses his trust, and perverts or abstracts public funds, would betray himself at once if he would allow his nature to speak out. But he drills and disciplines himself, and his eye is calm, and his countenance is taught to be composed, and he speaks and acts as if he were an innocent man, and buries the consciousness of the crime deep in the recesses of the soul. Soon the brow is like brass, and the frame is schooled not to betray, and the living indexes of guilt which God had affixed to the body are obliterated, and the conscience is seared, and the whole man has departed from the beautiful form which God made, and has become an artificial and a guilty thing.

Again. The arts of polished and refined life, to a melancholy extent, have the same object. They are so arranged as to conceal rancor, and envy, and hatred, and the desire of revenge. They aim not to eradicate them, but to conceal them. I speak, of course, not of all ; not I trust of the principal efforts which are made. I trust there is a much more pure and elevated code of morals among those who belong to the community called 'the world,' than there once was. Lord Chesterfield, who once gave absolute law to the fashionable world, and who was characterised by Johnson as 'teaching the morals of a woman of infamy, and the manners of a dancing-master,' led the way in this system of hypocrisy and deception. He himself was, not inappropriately, one of the first victims of the system. A favorite young man—an adopted son—to whom he wrote his celebrated letters, and on whom he lavished every possible means of education, was one of the first to conceal his own 'secret fault' in the marriage of a woman with whom a connection would have never met with his approbation, and with a sad and betrayed heart he lived to see that no confidence could be placed in his own hollow system. Yet who is

ignorant that the arts of polished life are often assumed for the most base purposes, and that with all that education can give, and all that accomplishment can furnish, man can 'smile, and smile, and be a villain still?' It is alleged not seldom that there are hypocrites in the church, and I do not deny that there may be. But there are hypocrites and deceivers elsewhere than in the church, and there is many a concealed purpose, many a secret fault in the bosoms of those 'graced with polished manners and fine sense,' who have assumed an outward guise the better to impose on the world.

(2.) Many secret sins are concealed because there is no opportunity of carrying the purpose into execution. The plan is laid, but some unforeseen occurrence prevents the execution of it, and it is abandoned. In some instances it may be cherished for years, and is not abandoned until the last hope of carrying it into effect fails. A man forms a purpose of revenge, and pursues it from year to year, and looks out for an opportunity to gratify it, until all hope fails, and then it is abandoned. Or, in more cases still, the plan is arrested by death, and the man dies with his wicked scheme unaccomplished. In the aggregate of the sins of this world, the number of unfinished plans of evil is not small; the number of those who are hurried into eternity with their plans unexecuted is not few, and no man who forms such a plan knows but that he will be hurried away while his scheme of iniquity is just ripening. No one knows, in the mysteriousness of sudden deaths, how many a just and merciful God takes away for the very purpose of arresting an unexecuted scheme of evil, and of saving the innocent from the wiles of the destroyer.

(3.) Many faults are secret, because the individual has never been placed in circumstances to develop his character. He has innate propensities to evil of which he is unconscious, and which would be soon developed if he were placed in a favorable situation to show what he is. No small part of the virtue of this world is the result of circumstances. It is external and artificial. It does not reach and control the heart. It is formed by education; or it takes its form from the prevalent opinions in society; or it is a matter of convenience or policy. Beneath it

there is latent evil never yet brought out, and corruption which has never been exposed. No one of us knows what we would be if we were so situated in life as to reveal exactly what we are. And none of us, therefore, should pride ourselves on our own supposed virtue, nor should we harshly judge our guilty fellows. *They* may have shown what they are; *we* may have a nature quite as corrupt as they, and yet while they have wrecked character, and hope, and peace by their vices, we may be congratulating ourselves on our own purity, and priding ourselves on our integrity. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

(4.) Connected with this we may observe, that the restraints of society conceal many a fault, and hide it from public view. The germ of the evil exists; and when a favorable opportunity presents itself, it is manifested. The restraints around a young man in a refined family or neighborhood, often guard him. The authority of a father; the mild influence of a mother; the society of a sister, or the courtesies of life in the society in which he moves, preserve him. In a distant city, or in a foreign land, how different the fact in regard to him! There the tendency of the heart is developed, and in scenes of amusement and sin the restraints of morality and of religion he alike disregarded and renounced.

Such are some of the ways in which the faults of the soul are concealed. Who is there that is not conscious that he has himself such secret faults? Who is there that has not been training himself, though perhaps unconsciously, to conceal them? Who is there that has not feelings and plans that he is not willing to disclose—not merely because he believes that another one has not a *right* to break in upon the secrecy of his own feelings and views, but because he knows they are *wrong*? If the wish of some of the old philosophers that every man should have a glass in his bosom could be realized, how few would venture out in the streets at noonday! What confusion, and blushes, and attempts at concealment would it produce in any promiscuous assembly! How would the busy world seek the shades of night; and our houses be dens where we would seek to hide ourselves! There is not a man among us that would be willing to have his



thoughts for a single week—the purest week of his life—written down and read to an assembly like this. For the truth of this, I appeal to every man's own consciousness. And if this be truth, then what is the human heart! What is man! And with what propriety may each one urge the prayer of the text, and say, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

III. I proceed, in the third and last place, to state some reasons why we should pray to be delivered from secret faults. I remark,

(1.) We should do it because we specially need the grace of God to overcome them. I presume most of us who have made the attempt to subdue the inborn propensities of our nature to evil, have become entirely satisfied of our impotency in such an undertaking. Our external conduct we can better guard and secure. The restraints of education, of our professions, and of society, aid us much. Our calling may lead us into the circles of the refined and the pure; our profession may be such as shall constrain us to act on the principles of honesty and honor; our whole success in life may be dependent on our external probity and consistency. To fall into open sin, in such circumstances, is rare; and the prospect of it is not so great as seriously to alarm a virtuous mind. I believe, indeed, that it is only by the grace of God that we can be kept in the paths of *external morality*, and I put no great confidence in that untried and untempted virtue which is confident of a power to stand by itself; but still there are helps for the promotion of that virtue in the very frame-work of a well-organized society, on which we may place some reliance. But what protection against secret sins is there around the human heart? Who knows it so well that he can guard the approaches to it? Who can so well describe or understand the delicate laws of its associations as to be able to defend it from unholy thoughts? Who can arrest the passage of that flitting unholy thought that comes from you know not where, and is brought you know not how, and that, however brief may be its stay, always leaves pollution behind it? Who can safely analyze the laws of his own mind in regard to evil, and arrest and hold the train of polluted images long enough to know how to



guard against them in future, without danger of finding a guilty pleasure in the contemplation, and desiring to retain them? Who can arrest that tide of evil recollections that comes pouring like a flood into a man's bosom from the remembrances of his past life? Who can of himself break the subtle chain of associated evil thoughts, or by an act of volition make a polluted mind pure? And who—for I believe there is, and was, and is to be such an agency—who can foresee the approach of the great tempter, and shut up the avenues of the heart against him, and make his fiery darts rebound? It is not in feeble human nature to be successful alone in this warfare, and he who has but once made the experiment, will feel the propriety of applying to God to help him. More distressed and troubled by far at these secret faults than at the danger of external derilection from duty; more downcast and sad at the triumph which sin gets over him than from losses of property or health; more anxious for purity of heart than for gold, yea, than much fine gold, he will feel the necessity of looking to the Great Source of purity and strength for aid. For often the sadness on a man's countenance is not from losses and the cares of this life; not from the death of friends, or failure of business; it is from this internal war—this heavy load—these fiery arrows—these secret faults—these unholy imaginings—these distressing inroads made by intruding plans of evil on his peace. 'O what would not I give,' may express the language of not a few, 'for one day of perfect purity—one day without an improper emotion, or an unholy feeling—one day when I should think, and speak, and act just as I ought to—one day like that of an angel;—like a day of the life of Jesus; like the passing moments of the ever-blessed God. For such a day of purity I would part with all earth's gilded baubles, and sacrifice the most brilliant schemes that this world can furnish. How sweet would sleep be at the close of such a day! How blessed to live—to awake again to repeat it, and to walk with God in perfect holiness. O come that blessed day when my heart shall be thus pure; and when I shall sigh no more at night over the recollected errors and secret faults of the day, and when I shall feel that my easily-besetting sins shall torture my bosom no more!'

(2.) Such secret faults are peculiarly offensive to God, and we should, therefore, pray to be cleansed from them. The guilt of the wicked plan is not annihilated or diminished in the view of the Searcher of hearts, because he chooses to arrest it by his own Providence, or because he never allows the sinner the opportunity of accomplishing it. Indeed the guilt of a long-cherished plan of evil, though it is never executed, may be much greater in his sight than an outbursting of sudden passion, or a sudden yielding to temptation. Many an open act of sin is momentary, and then is over. Wrath kindles in the eye, and then as soon dies away. It is the passion of one,

“That carries anger, as the flint bears fire,  
Which much enforced, shows a hasty spark,  
And straight is cold again.”

But the plan of revenge, the proud and obstinate temper, the purposes of infamy, may be long cherished, and will constitute in fact the real character of the man. That will be far more hateful in the sight of God than the sudden burst of passion, or the solitary act of intemperance, or even the deed of blood, for these may be the result of temporary excitement. So of forgotten crime. It has passed away from your recollection. But though the specific act has passed away from your remembrance, yet its effects have not. It left a withering and a blighting influence on your soul. You are a less happy man, and a less pure man than you would have been had it not been for the secret fault, though that may have been long since forgotten. As fire that passes through the forest, leaves long desolation when the flame is extinguished, so has been the withering effects of sin on your soul—and God sees that soul scathed and blasted by the indwelling of former sinful thoughts and feelings.

(3.) And I add, finally, that we should pray for this, because if secret faults are indulged, they will sooner or later break out like smothered fires, and the true character of the heart will be developed. Fires uncap a mountain because they have been long accumulating, and can be confined no longer. Streams that flow far under ground, somewhere, though far from the fountain, make their way to the surface. Disease that is long in the

system, and that flows round and round in the blood, will at some time manifest itself, and so it is with the corruptions of the heart. They cannot always be concealed, and God designs that they shall not always be. It is well, under the divine administration, that the true state of the heart should be made manifest, and that it should be seen what man is. Accordingly, few things are more common, than such sudden developments of character, and outbreaks of the secret faults of the soul. We are often shocked by such cases, and our philosophy about man seems to fail, and we are at a loss to account for the instances of sudden depravity that appal the community. A man of fair character, and enjoying universal confidence, becomes suddenly a public defaulter. A clergyman is guilty of some crime that shocks the moral sense of mankind. A man of supposed regular habits becomes suddenly intemperate. A man clothed with power, like Arnold, betrays his trust, and attempts to sell his country. A judge on the bench, like Bacon, shocks the world by the undisputed fact that he has been bribed. The community is horror-stricken, and we feel for the moment like distrusting every man, and doubting all virtue and all piety, and we are almost led to conclude that all our estimates of human character on which we have heretofore acted are false—and we ask, not improperly, who is safe? In whom can we confide? And we begin to distrust every clergyman, and every officer, and every man of supposed integrity and good morals in public life, and every judge on the bench.

But these painful disclosures are not departures from the great principles of human nature. There is a maxim in law, that no one suddenly becomes eminently vile.\* These melancholy lapses into sin are but *exponents* of the real character of the man; the regular results of a long course of guilt; the regular outbreaks of secret faults—like the breaking out of the volcano, or like the tumbling down of a bowing wall, or the fall of a house that has been long undermined by secret streams. In the case of the clergyman who becomes unprincipled and vile; who shocks our moral sense, and degrades himself

\* Nemo repente turpissimus.



and his high calling by some public and shameful offence, we are not to suppose that this is a *sudden* fault or crime. There has been a long previous preparation. There has been a relaxing of the high sense of obligation, and of the sacredness of his calling; there has been a train of evil thoughts, and unholy imaginings; there has been an indulgence in guilty wishes, and the roving of an impure eye and imagination;—there has been a neglect of secret prayer and of communion with God—and God suffers him to fall, not merely to mark his detestation of the open crime, but of the long train of evil thoughts that have led on at length to so painful a catastrophe. The man who has betrayed his trust, and who shocks the community by some stupendous crime as a public defaulter, we are not to suppose has been led by sudden temptation into the sin, or that the act which now amazes us is a solitary act. Back of that, there has been a series of secret faults that have been accumulating like pent up waters, and that now burst forth in an enormous act of guilt that sweeps away every thing that is valuable in his character, and that is peaceful in his domestic circle. The man who betrays his country, as Arnold sought to do, does not perform such a deed by one act of sudden temptation. Far back in guilty pleasures, in extravagance of living, in secret dissatisfaction with his commander or his country, in disappointed ambition, envy, malice, or covetousness, is laid the foundation of the enormous crime, and the act of treason is just the *exponent* of the man's secret guilt. And the judge on the bench who disregards the purity of the ermine, and who sells justice for a bribe, does not do this deed alone. It is the result of secret crimes and guilty desires, of a weakened sense of honor and obligation, of habitual contemplation of plans of evil, until the strength of guilt surpasses his sense of honesty and honor, and he falls to rise no more. And so *our* cherished secret faults will yet manifest themselves unless they are checked and removed by the grace of God, and by the blood of the atonement. In a pure heart only are we safe. The indulgence in unholy thoughts, and impure imaginings, and in the contemplation of guilty pleasures, no man, no matter what his rank or standing or external character, is safe. We are safe only



when in the sincerity of our hearts, and in the deep consciousness of internal corruption and great feebleness, we can lift our eyes habitually to heaven, and say, "Cleanse us from secret faults, keep us back from presumptuous transgression."

## REMARKS.

(1.) Who can understand his errors? Who knows what man is? Who knows himself? We look upon the fair exterior, the polished manners, but who knows what is in the heart? A man of forty feels that he knows much less of himself than he supposed he did at twenty; and increasing years only serve to astonish him with the great deep of depravity in the human soul. His own heart is more and more an enigma; and his observation of his own feelings teach him more and more to distrust himself. We look on men high in office and in public confidence, we see them on an eminence, and a halo of glory seems to be around their heads, and then we see them suddenly fall into irretrievable ignominy, and we instinctively ask, who is safe? Who is next to fall? Who can be safely and wholly trusted? We weep over their fall. Let the effect be to lead us more and more to distrust ourselves, and to put our trust in God.

(2.) We should be humble. The fall of others, and our own conscious sinfulness; our deeds of forgotten guilt and our half-executed plans of evil, should make us humble. "Oh, why should mortal man be proud?"

'Follies and crimes, a countless sum,  
Are crowded in life's little span;  
How ill, alas, does pride become  
That erring, guilty creature, man!'

Our career has done but little to lift us up with pride in its recollection; and our own course of life should produce any other feeling than self-congratulation in the retrospect.

(3.) We have much to dread at the revelations of the day of judgment. Those secret faults of the sinner will be brought out to noon-day then. God will bring every secret thing into judgment. You have labored long and hard to conceal your purposes. You have supposed that

the darkness of night might hide them. You have congratulated yourself in the belief that they were unknown by the world. But there has been one eye upon you and your sins—one eye that has never been turned away by day or by night; and there has been a book of record where every word, and thought, and feeling has been written down; and there is one mind that remembers all. Sinner, for every evil thought, for every impure desire, for every deed of darkness, for every half-formed plan of evil, you are to give account to God. O what a scene will be exhibited on the great day of trial! Who can bear the revelations of that day? Who of you could bear to have your past lives and feelings all drawn out and exposed in letters of living light to this congregation? Who is there here that would not call on the mountains to shelter him, and the hills to cover him, at the prospect of such a revelation? Not one. With no consciousness of sinfulness but such as I believe common to man; with the recollection of the general aim of my life to do right; with great occasion for thanksgiving that I have been preserved from the open vices that have ruined so many who began the career of life with me, yet I confess to you, that if there is any thing that I should more than all other things dread, it would be that the record of all my thoughts and feelings should be exhibited to the assembled universe in the last day. That the universe would acquiesce in my condemnation on such a revelation, I have no manner of doubt. And if there is any one thing for which I desire to give unfeigned thanks more than others, it is that through the blood of Christ, those sins may be blotted out; and that through the infinite mercy of God the secret sins of which I am conscious, may NEVER—no NEVER—be disclosed to assembled worlds.

## SERMON XXI.

### PREPARATION TO MEET GOD.

Amos iv. 12. Prepare to meet thy God.

FROM these impressive and solemn words, I propose to give an answer to the following enquiries :

I. To whom may the command be considered as addressed ?

II. Why should a preparation be made to meet God ?

III. In what way are we to prepare for it ? and

IV. When should it be done ?

I. To whom may the command be considered as addressed ? The general answer to this enquiry is obvious. It is to be regarded as addressed to all those who have made no preparation for meeting God ; I mean those who have never made this a specific and settled part of their plans, or who have not devoted their attention to it so as to have that done which is needful to be done. This class comprises a large portion of the human family ; a large portion of those to whom the gospel is preached. The idea is, that they have done nothing which can be considered as having been performed with reference to the future interview with their final Judge. They have done many things—and done them very well—with reference to other matters, but they have done nothing with a distinct desire and intention to be prepared to stand at his bar.

This general description comprises several classes who may be regarded as especially addressed.

(1.) Those who have designedly crowded the whole subject from their minds, and who have been unwilling to bestow any thought on it as a personal matter. They may have listened respectfully to the preaching of the gospel ; or they may have bestowed some attention on religion as a speculative enquiry, but they have intentionally resisted all its appeals to them personally. Whenever they have reasoned or conversed on the subject of

religion, it has been with an intention that it should make no personal impression on them. They have never allowed the warnings and appeals of truth to have any direct bearing on themselves; nor in the whole course of their lives have they ever done one thing with a distinct and simple *intention* to be prepared to meet God. They have done nothing which cannot be accounted for on some other supposition, and they are conscious that they have never spent one half hour in their lives in doing any thing with a sole desire to be prepared to meet their Maker.

(2.) This description embraces also those who have deferred the subject with an intention to prepare at a future time. They have some sense of the importance and necessity of making preparation. They see and admit that something more is to be done than has been done. It is not their design that it shall be wholly neglected. But they have deferred doing what is necessary to be done—whatever they may suppose that to be—to a future period;—one till he shall have finished his education; another till he shall be more at leisure, and less burdened with cares; another to a bed of sickness; another to old age, or the hour of death. Whatever may be the motives which lead them to delay it; or whatever may be their views of what is necessary to be done, they agree in this, that it is not yet done, and that a preparation is yet to be made.

(3.) There are embraced in this general class, also, those who have spent their time in preparing for other things, so as to crowd this subject out, though without any specific or settled intention to do so. They have been anxious to get ready for this life, and they have unconsciously, almost—or thoughtlessly, at any rate—neglected a preparation for a life to come. At one time they have been occupied in preparing for a journey or a voyage—and then it was crowded from the mind. Or the youth has been fitting for college, or for a profession; or the young female has been engaged in acquiring skill in music, or solid learning, or preparing to adorn the refined circle; or the young man has been preparing to be a merchant, or a mechanic; and a preparation to meet God has been—not exactly with design, but insensibly



neglected. It has not come before his mind as a matter of distinct enquiry, what is necessary to be prepared to meet God, as it has what is necessary to prepare him to act his part well in life—or if it has, it has been a momentary suggestion, and the solution has been deferred to a future period, and he is now unprepared.

(4.) The general description embraces, also, those who have given some slight attention to the subject, but who have settled down on that which will in fact constitute no preparation when they come to appear before God. They are relying on some delusive views and hopes; some erroneous doctrine, or opinions; some vague, unsettled, and unsubstantial feelings; something that is different from what God has declared to be essential to a preparation to meet him. It is immaterial to my purpose what that may be; nor will I run the risk of exciting prejudice against what I am yet to say, by attempting to specify what I mean. The general remark is all that is needful here—that it is not *every thing* which will prepare a man to meet God. On some things we should agree—on others we might differ. We should agree that it is not a man's height or color; not beauty or strength; not talent or learning; not wealth or adorning; not external accomplishments or professional eminence; not splendid mansions or equipage, that constitute a preparation to meet God. We might differ as to the point whether amiableness and honesty; whether a fair character and a life of integrity; whether, if we do right to men, though we neglect our Maker, some or all of these things would be a sufficient preparation. It is not needful to argue that point here. The general observation will be undisputed—that there is *something* which is required to prepare us to meet God, and that it is possible that we may be depending on *something else* rather than on what God demands. If it is not beauty that is required, it is something else; if it is not wealth, it is something else; if it is not accomplishment, it is something else; if it is not amiableness, it is something else; if it is not external morality, it is something else; and we may be mistaking that which is *not* required for that which *is*. But in such a case it is clear that there would be in fact no preparation to meet God.

These classes, it will be seen at once, embrace a large portion of the human family. What with those who intentionally crowd the whole subject from the mind, and those who designedly postpone it to a future period, and those who in preparing for other things neglect a preparation to meet God, and those who make a false preparation—in the church and out of it—no one can doubt that a very large proportion of the community is embraced. For the most solemn and important moment of existence no preparation is made, and the mass of men live as if it were never to occur. The use to be made of this fact belongs to another part of this discourse. I proceed to the

II. Second point of my discourse—to show *why* preparation should be made to meet God. Why may it not be left without special solicitude as an event where preparation would be needless? The answers to this question will probably at once occur to every reflecting mind; but though obvious, they are such as in the hurry and bustle of life we are prone to forget, and I will recall some of them to your recollection. They are such as the following.

(1.) Because it is to be our first interview with him, face to face. Here we do not see him. We attempt to trace the proofs of his existence in his works, and look “through nature up to nature’s God”; or we listen to his commands and threatenings in his word. But he is unseen still, and the conception is faint and obscure. “No man hath seen him, or can see him and live.” We trace along the proofs of his existence in his works from point to point; but we do not see God. We stretch our eyes over the vast ocean, and see the proof that he is great; but we do not see God in the distance. We follow the lightning’s rapid flash as the clouds are covered with a blaze of light; but that flash does not enable us, through the openings of the clouds, to see God. We seize the telescope and point it to the heavens, and look on rolling worlds, and penetrate into the unfathomable abyss where no numbers can compute the distance; but still amidst those distant worlds and systems we have not seen God. We close our eyes in prayer, and address the invisible

and the great God, and attempt to form in our imaginations an image of what he is; but we have not seen him. When we die we shall meet him face to face. It will be the first interview where the veil of flesh and sense will not obscure the vision; and for such an interview with the Almighty God man should be prepared.

(2.) We should make preparation because we shall meet him in very solemn circumstances. It will be away from friends; from the body; from the familiar scenes with which we have been conversant here. It will be when we shall be alone with God. It will be the next act that shall succeed the solemn act of dying. A man who is to meet God as soon as he dies, should make some preparation for it. If he were to meet him on a lonely mountain, like Moses, amidst clouds and tempests—though he had left many friends at the base—as he clambered up its steep ascent, he would feel that he ought to be prepared for that solemn interview. How much more when he leaves his friends weeping around his pale, lifeless body; when he travels alone and disembodied, the untrodden, dark way up to God; when he goes there without a friend or an advocate; when he goes to come back no more!

(3.) We should make preparation because we go there on a very solemn errand. We go there not as idle spectators; not to behold the glory of the divine dwelling and throne; not as we often travel to other lands to see the works of nature, or the monuments of art; but we go on the final trial, and with reference to the irreversible doom of the soul. A man who is soon to be put on trial for his life, feels that much must be done with reference to that important day in his existence; and makes the preparation accordingly. Every thing about the kind of testimony on which he can rely; every thing in the law, in the character of the judge and of the jury, becomes to him a matter of moment, and he looks it all over with most anxious solicitude. He who should have the prospect of such a trial before him, and who should evince the same unconcern on these points which the mass of men do in reference to their trial before God, would be regarded as a fool or a madman. Should we go into his cell and find him engaged in blowing up bub-



bles, or in some other trifling employment, manifesting the utmost indifference to all that we could say of the character of the judge or jury, or to the importance of being prepared for the arraignment, we should regard him as bereft of the characteristics of a rational being. On the issue of that interview with God depends every thing that is dear to us hereafter. There will not be a moment in all that boundless eternity before us which will not be affected by the results of that day's investigation. To us, it will be the most solemn moment of our existence—a period to be remembered in all the days of our future being—as it should be anticipated with anxious solicitude in all the days that precede it.

(4.) We should make preparation, because he has solemnly commanded it. With the utmost clearness and solemnity, he has required us to be ready. No part of the Saviour's instructions was more plain and solemn than to make this the first business of life. Every thing else was to give way to it. Not even love to a parent; not the care of a family; not the duty of hospitality to friends; not even attendance on the funeral obsequies of a deceased relative were to interfere with this. First in our affections; first in our efforts, we were to seek God;—and whatever else was neglected, that was not to be deferred for one moment. My friend, you value yourself on the fact that you are not an open violater of the law of God. You do not worship idols; you do not profane the name of God; you do not curse father and mother; you are not a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, a liar. But here is a command as positive, as direct, as solemn, and I add as important as any one of these—a command which you are habitually and of design neglecting. It is not mere counsel or advice; it is the solemn *command* of the Most High, to be ready to meet him, to be prepared to give up your account, to be fitted for the final trial, to settle the great question of the soul's salvation as the *first* thing in life. No one can doubt that he meant to be understood as saying that this is his *first* claim on the heart, and that your first duty is there.

(5.) We should make preparation to meet him, because when we are brought before him it will be too late to do



what is necessary to be done. The path up to the judgment-seat is not a way of preparation; nor at his bar is it a place to prepare for eternity. It is no time to prepare for battle when the enemy is in the camp; no time to make ready to meet a foe when he has broken open your door. There *is* such a thing as putting off preparation until it is too late. A man may neglect the care of his health, until it is too late. A student may suffer the proper time to prepare for a profession to glide away, until it is too late. A farmer may neglect to plough and sow, until it is too late. A man on a rapid stream near a cataract may neglect to make efforts to reach the shore, until it is too late. And so in religion. It is easy to put it off from childhood to youth; from youth to manhood; from manhood to old age, until it shall be too late. Beyond that interview with God, there is no preparation. Your eternity is not to be made up of a series of successive probations, where, though you fail in one, you may avail yourself of another. There is but *one* probation—O how short; how fleeting; how soon gone! The shuttle of the weaver flies not swifter; nor do the shadows move more rapidly over the plain. Each day leaves the number less—and not one of them can be recalled. Life is passed through not to be travelled over again; and each footprint is made to be seen by us no more. He that comes after us may track our way nearer and nearer to the beach where the ocean of eternity rolls; he may see step after step in the sand—till he comes to the last print, half washed away by the tide, where we plunged into the vast ocean and disappeared forever. You go not back again. This day, this hour, you live but once—and this setting sun will have taken one irrecoverably from the allotted days of your probation. I wonder at man. The earth is our place of probation—and it is *all*—literally, absolutely *all*. In that probation, if ever, you and I are to be prepared for that vast eternity on which we enter in a few days. If not prepared then, we are never to be prepared. Point me, fellow-mortal, to the slightest proof whatever, or to the slightest presumption—I will not ask for proof—that another season of probation is to be granted to you beyond the judgment of the great day, and I will never urge this point again. But if there *is* none, my dying

fellow-man, you ought to be prepared to meet God. It is not a thing of privilege, it is a thing of obligation. Your conscience, your reason, your sober judgment all respond to the claim which I urge upon you, that you should be ready to meet God. You who have adopted it as a settled purpose that you will not enter a profession without being prepared for it; you who will not appear in the gay assembly without hours spent, under skilful hands, at the toilet, that you may be prepared for it, ought to be prepared to appear before God. You ought to have on a brighter than any earthly array; you ought to have on the garments of salvation—the pure and spotless robes wrought by the “Redeemer’s hands and dyed in his blood.” Not as you are now, sinful, unforgiven, gay, worldly, thoughtless, ambitious, should you stand before the great and pure **JEHOVAH** to receive the sentence which will seal your eternal doom.

III. I proceed, in the third place, to show what is necessary to be done in order to be prepared to meet God. I shall do this in the fewest words, and in the plainest manner possible.

I would observe then, that mere bravery or courage is not a preparation to meet God. The soldier meets the cannon’s mouth; the duellist meets his foe on the field; the strong man meets danger without shrinking; the dying man on a bed of pain summons all his strength, and neither trembles nor is alarmed—and *bravely dies*. Strong in physical courage, his cheek is not blanched with fear, nor do his knees tremble at the approach of danger; and friends and eulogists, patriots and historians, send the brave man to heaven. But I take it, God is not to be met with mere bravery or heroism. It is not physical courage that is to carry the point against the Almighty. The battery may be approached by the brave man; murderer may meet murderer in the field, and look each other in the eye without quailing, but this is not the way in which man is to meet God—face to face, and eye to eye. Nor are courage, and defiance, and the fearless bearing which faces the cannon’s mouth, that by which the kingdom of heaven is to be taken. The conquests of Cæsar, Alexander, Napoleon, and Nelson stopped far this side

the eternal throne; nor will bravery ever make an impression on the Almighty God.

Not more is he prepared to meet God who bids defiance to death; who can jest at the dying pang; who summons all his vigor to maintain his infidel principles to the last, and who secures the eulogium from his friends, 'He died like a man. He shrank not; he feared not; he trembled not; and firm in his principles and integrity, he died like a man.' Like a man, exactly:—a proud, self-confident, sinful man. He has his reward. Some friend will rear a stone over his tomb, or pen a lying obituary notice that assures the world that he has gone to heaven; and the lying epitaph shall delude hundreds, while his soul shall be in hell. But God is not thus deceived. Nor does forced and unnatural calmness, or miserable stupidity at the approach of death, beguile him with the belief that the man proud as Lucifer, though in death, has a claim to an admission to heaven. The indecent jesting of Hume when he died did not move God any more than the ravings and blasphemies of Paine or Voltaire. Nor is a studied insensibility in death the proper preparation to meet God. Insensibility is not what God has any where, either by reason or his word, required. It is no more manly than it is religious, to be insensible at the prospect of appearing at the bar of God. He who can sport on death's brink, and laugh at the idea of being brought on trial before the eternal bar, or cultivate a studied insensibility at the idea of eternity, has no more the spirit of a man than he has of a Christian. It is a place where man *ought* to feel; where God meant he *should* feel; and where all his nature commands him to feel.

What is then necessary to prepare us to meet God? I answer,

(1.) It is necessary to be reconciled to him. No one is prepared to meet him to whom he is a stranger or a foe. No one can be prepared to meet him who has been at no pains to enquire into his character, or who has never sought to please him. No one can be prepared to meet him who has resisted his claims, and who has during his life put himself into an attitude of hostility to him. The man who has made it a point to resist every impression which God would make on his heart; to crowd from



his mind all the appeals which He has made to him ; to have as little to do with him as possible ; never to think of him if he could avoid it, and, when it could not be avoided, to think of him only as severe, and harsh, and unjust in his claims, is assuredly not prepared to meet him. Could he avoid it, he never would meet him. Had he his own choice, he would prefer never to think of him again. But in order to meet him in peace, it is needful that the heart be reconciled to him. Enmity must be laid aside. He must be regarded as a friend ; and whatever there is in the heart of hostility to him, or of dissatisfaction with his government and claims ; whatever disposition there is to disregard or oppose him, must be laid aside. No man can be prepared to meet him who in form or in fact, in heart or in public conduct, regards him as an enemy. When we come to stand before God we shall wish to look on him as a friend, and not as an Almighty Foe. Hence, with the utmost propriety, the whole of the gospel is regarded as an exhortation to men to be reconciled to God. 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

(2.) It is necessary in order to be prepared to meet God, to be born again ; to be renewed by the Holy Ghost. A higher than man—he who is to decide our eternal destiny—has settled this without any ambiguity. “ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John iii. 3. No matter what else a man may have, unless he has experienced *this* change, he will be excluded from heaven. It would be impossible to make a statement more explicit, or more alarming to large classes of men. The heart is deceitful. It betrays itself. And it is on *this* point constantly practising a deception. You do not mean to be regarded as infidels—and you are not ; you are not disposed to be ranked with scoffers ; you are not disposed to be the open enemy of any of the doctrines of the Bible ; but *here* there is a constant delusion playing around the heart, and a secret and most withering unbelief of the words of the Saviour. ‘ You must be born again,’ is the Redeemer’s language, ‘ or you cannot be saved.’ Yet the feeling of the heart is, ‘ there may be an exception *in my case*. My character for integrity or amiableness is such that it cannot be indis-



pensable for me, and the heart is, unconsciously almost, substituting something in place of the new birth. You do not depend on the fact that you have been born again as the evidence that you will be saved. You depend on something else—something which in *your* case will render such a change unnecessary. And when you think of meeting God, it is not with the evidence that the heart has been changed, but with something else that may then answer the purpose, or may be substituted in its stead.

(3.) There must be true repentance for sin, and true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. On this point, no one here will doubt what are the teachings of the Bible. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believed not shall be damned." No declarations can possibly be more explicit than those which occur respecting the necessity of repentance and faith. They are addressed to all classes of mankind; they admit of no exceptions. The man who, in the fair sense of the word, is a true penitent, and has true faith in the Lord Jesus, is prepared to meet God; the man who is *not* a penitent, and who has *not* that faith, is *not* prepared to meet him. He may be prepared for other things, but he is not prepared for that hour when he will stand at his bar. He may be prepared to adorn a profession; to charm in the social circle; to preside on a bench of justice; to occupy an exalted office; to go as an ambassador to foreign courts; but he is not prepared to meet his Maker. He may be rich, honored, beloved, talented, learned, but he is not ready to meet God. You may be amiable, accomplished, admired, flattered, but you are not prepared to meet God. For the truth of this, I plant my foot not on human reasoning or conjecture; not on philosophy or fancy; but on the authority of the Bible.

The sum of what I say is this: To be prepared to meet God, we must comply exactly with what he requires. We must meet his terms. It is not what we would have supposed would constitute a preparation; it is not what we may fancy will answer the purpose; it is not what we may choose to substitute in its place. Arsenic will not supply the place of bread in supporting life, or oil the place of water in putting out a fire; nor will amiableness, and accomplishments, and learning, and external

morality supply the place of what God requires. You can find no substitute for reconciliation with God. You can find no declaration that *you* may be saved by morality, or amiableness, or integrity, and that *I* must be saved by faith in the Lord Jesus. You can find no evidence that you may be saved by an upright life, and by your rank in society, and the poor and the down-trodden only by faith in the Lord Jesus. God makes no such distinctions among mankind. There are no such classes and grades in his kingdom. There are no royal paths to heaven. There are but two classes of people on earth—the righteous and the wicked. There are but two paths that mortals travel—the way to heaven and the way to hell. There are but two places at the judgment bar—the right and the left hand of the Judge. There are but two worlds beyond—heaven and hell—one the abode of the penitent and believing—the other of the impenitent and the unbelieving. There are no Elysian fields—where the proud, the gay, the fashionable, the impenitent may dwell—fields of fancy, of amusement, of poetry, of the dance and the song—or realms of irreligious literature and science, where those may dwell who do not like to retain God in their knowledge.

No one ever need to have made any mistake on this point. If any one is ignorant of what is necessary in order to enter heaven, it is his own fault. It is not needful that any one should live without hope; it is not needful that any one should meet God unprepared. So plain is the account of this matter in the Bible that he may run that reads; and if any man comes to a bed of death unprepared, he does it with his eyes open. There is not a child here who cannot tell what is needful to be prepared to meet God; and I am not mentioning any *new* thing to you when I remind you that what you are relying on for salvation is not what God requires. Your amiableness is not the love of God. Your morality is not religion. Your accomplishments are not faith in Jesus Christ. Your pride of heart and character; your dependence on your own righteousness, is not repentance. Your indifference to religion is not the peace resulting from reconciliation with God; your cultivated stoicism when you think of death, is not the Christian victory over the grave. Phy-

sical and moral courage ; the bravery which defies death, is not the qualification with which to meet God.

IV. It remains only to add a remark on the fourth point proposed—the enquiry *when* we should prepare to meet God? You anticipate what I would say. You know what is the requirement in the Bible on that point. You have heard, to painful satiety, the arguments and commands which require us to do it now ;—to attend to it to-day ; to defer it no longer. You are familiar with the fact that the Bible requires it to be done at once ; that it demands that every thing else should give way for that ; that this day may end your probation, and that there is slender probability that preparation will be made on a dying bed. I might content myself with laying this command across your path—‘Prepare to meet thy God.’ I might go to the Bible, and bring appeals and commands almost without number, all pressing the point, ‘Prepare to meet thy God.’ I might take you to the sinner’s death-bed, and describe his dying horrors, and pointing you to that sad scene, say to you, ‘Prepare to meet thy God.’ I might ask you to recall the cases of sudden death—when the young, the vigorous, and the lovely, die—and pointing you to their solemn warnings, say, ‘Prepare to meet thy God.’ I might ask you to go and walk among the tombs ; to measure the length of the graves there, to find out whether any die as young as you ; or to recall, as you stand there, the image of some dear departed friend, or the last accents and warnings of a mother, and say to you in that solemn scene, ‘Young man, prepare to meet thy God.’ Or I might attempt a description of the scenes of the last day—of the rising dead ; of the descending Saviour ; of the throne of judgment ; of the alarm and horror of the sinner there ; of the awful doom which awaits him—and, standing by anticipation amidst these solemn scenes, might say, ‘Prepare to meet thy God.’ I had thought of a different line of remark with which to close my appeal. I had thought of making your own sentiments speak out, and of exhibiting the reasoning which is passing through your mind ; and when the command comes, ‘Prepare to meet God,’ I had thought to say to you, as you say to yourself, ‘No—do not obey it now. It is doubtful whether it is for you. It is for that miserable

wretch—the outcast of society. It is for that profane and drunken man. It is for the miserable heathen; that poor slave; the weather-beaten seaman; the prisoner doomed to die; the profligate young man; the bold blasphemer. It cannot be for you, so amiable, so upright, so moral. Regard it not—at least *now*. Enjoy that party which you have in anticipation; go into that gay circle where God is forgotten; refuse to be found among the anxious and the troubled, who enquire the way to life. Not for you, so young, so vigorous, so full of hope, so loved, so anxious to please all; not for you with such a chance of life, and with a character so amiable, can such a command be intended; not for you certainly *now*, whatever may be in future years. Enjoy the world. Make much of it. Drive on its pleasures and its gains; and forget the God that made you, and forget that there is a Saviour that died for you, and that there is a grave, a heaven, a judgment, and an eternity.’ But I must not speak so. Ye young of either sex; ye children, youth, men; ye amiable, upright, accomplished, moral, there *is* a grave; a God; a heaven; a hell. I solemnly warn you as a minister of religion—myself soon to die—to be ready for death; and were it my dying message, would say with the last lisping accents of my lips, ‘Prepare now to meet thy God’ Let not that sun set, I solemnly conjure and charge you, in view of the judgment of the great day, without having done *something*—without having at least once *prayed*—that you may be prepared to meet God!



## SERMON XXII.

### THE BURDEN OF DUMAH.

Isa. xxi. 11, 12. The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night.—If ye will enquire, enquire ye. Return. Come.

THIS is a single prophecy; and a whole prophecy. It has no immediate connection with what precedes, or with what follows in the chapter; and if it were taken out of the place which it now occupies in the Book of Isaiah, and placed in any other part of the Book, or even of the Bible, I do not see but it would be as intelligible as it is now. It is a striking specimen of the manner of Isaiah when he is full of a subject, and when, as is often the case, the prophetic words flow from his mouth not like a gentle and fertilizing stream, but like a torrent that has been obstructed, and that now rushes impetuously over all barriers. It is also a specimen of his manner when he is ironical or sarcastic; and when he designs to convey some truth of vital interest that shall reach the heart of a taunting enemy of God and his cause. The prophecy is abrupt, concise, enigmatical, obscure. It is probably little understood by most of the readers of this wonderful prophet, as it has been by most commentators. Yet, notwithstanding its obscurity, it is seen to be beautiful; and there are few readers of the Bible who do not wish to understand it. It is capable, I think, of an easy explanation; and is adapted to convey most important instruction alike to the friends and the enemies of God:—to the former, when desponding and disheartened in view of personal trials and calamities, or in view of a persecuted and distracted church, or of a darkened world;—to the latter, when they are disposed to taunt the friends of God; to revile them in suffering; or to ridicule their solicitude for the coming of the kingdom of the Redeemer on earth.

It is a vital part of the work of the ministry to explain

the Scriptures, and to show not only that the Bible is a book of eminent sublimity, truth, and beauty; but that it is adapted to convey most valuable instruction and admonition for all classes of mankind. I propose, therefore, to submit an exposition of this very obscure, and yet very striking prophecy; and in doing it, I shall,

I. In the first place, endeavor to explain it; and,

II. In the second place, exhibit the lessons which it teaches, or apply it to the friends and the foes of God.

I. In the explanation of the prophecy, it will be necessary to go somewhat into detail in an examination of the words and phrases of which it is composed. I will promise, however, that this shall not be tedious or uninteresting to those of you who will give me your patient attention. The prophecy is in these words: "The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night. If ye will enquire, enquire ye. Return. Come."

(1.) The word "*burden*," in the text, is a common word in the prophecies, and especially in Isaiah, to denote a prophetic message, or an oracle. It is usually, not always, given to such a message as foretold punishment or calamity; or such as was painful in its nature and adapted to weigh down the spirits. We have a similar idea in our language, when we speak of bad news as adapted to *weigh down* the spirits; or of suffering and calamity that is fitted to *oppress* the mind. Of this nature were many of the messages which the prophets were directed to bear;—messages predicting judgment and woe; foretelling the calamities of war, of the pestilence, or of captivity, and portraying ruined temples, cities, and towns,—messages alike painful to him who bare them, and to those to whom they were addressed. Such, I take it, was the message referred to here—a message indicating future calamity represented by the word *night*—"the night cometh;"—a message oppressive and burdensome to the prophet, and painful to the taunting inhabitants of Dumah.

(2.) The word "Dumah" in the text, is another name for Idumea, or the land of Edom. This country, settled by the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob, stretched

along on the south of Palestine, and extended as far as the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, and by conquest subsequently, far into the land of Moab. It is now a vast desert, travelled by wandering Arabs, and alike undistinguished for agriculture or commerce. Its capital was in Mount Seir—a mountain range laying south of the Dead Sea, in a plain now called Wady Mousa—or the valley of Moses. This is the Mount Seir referred to in the text; the place from which one is heard calling to the watchman, and enquiring respecting the night. The reader of the popular modern travels will be able to identify this place when he is reminded that this is the site of the celebrated city of Petra, so recently discovered and explored, and so fully described by travellers. Its site is a vast hollow in a mountain, with but a single way of access; its structures now are vast tombs, and temples, and theatres, and palaces cut with infinite toil from the solid rock; its inhabitants are the dead—and the living are not there, save when a Bedoui chieftain with his tribe passes along, or a lonely traveller spends a night in one of its tombs.

(3.) Between Dumah or Idumea and the Jews, there had been a long hostility; a hostility coming down from the strife between Jacob and Esau, and aggravated by all the bitterness of a family quarrel. The hostility was deepened when Moses led the children of Israel to the land of Canaan. The territory of Edom lay between him and Canaan, and he sent messengers to the king of Idumea to ask the privilege of peaceably passing through the land. "Let us pass, I pray thee," was the reasonable request, "through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left until we have passed thy borders." Num. xx. 17. This reasonable petition was denied. Moses repeated the request. "We will go," said he, "by the highway; and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then will I pay for it; I will only, without doing any thing else, go through on my feet." Ver. 19. This repeated and respectful request was met with as decided hostility, and the armies of Edom were sent to guard the way, and to



harrass the Israelites on their march. Edom soon became the implacable foe of the Jews. It formed alliances with their enemies; invaded their land; rejoiced in their defeats, and triumphed in their calamities. The immediate and special event, however, to which there is an indirect allusion in the text, was the unnatural and wicked exultation of the Idumeans when the temple at Jerusalem was fired, and the city was destroyed by the Chaldeans. Then, when calamity had come upon the whole Jewish nation, and when all the sympathies of Edom should have been excited in behalf of his much afflicted kinsmen, the descendants of Jacob, he joined in the exulting cry of the Chaldeans, and urged them on to the complete destruction of the holy city and the temple. "Remember, O Lord," said the Jews in their captivity, "remember the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem," i. e. in the day when Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, "who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof." Psalm cxxxvii. 7. Its enemies they urged on to the work of deeper destruction. They regarded the ruin as final and complete, and they exulted over desolate Judea, and the captivity of its inhabitants in Babylon.

(4.) This is the time to which the prophecy in our text refers. It was during the captivity at Babylon, and near its close. The temple was in ruins, and the city and the land were waste. The situation of their once beautiful and much-loved country may be described in the language of this same prophet uttering the words which the captives would use. "Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste." Isa. lxiv. 10, 11. This was the "night"—the long and chilly night referred to in the text; the night of destruction that had settled upon Judea; the calamity over which the dweller in Mount Seir was disposed still to exult.

(5.) At this time, and in this state of things, the prophet represents himself in vision as a watchman amidst desolate Jerusalem. It is night; a long night of calamity and wo. He is stationed there to observe the approach of better times; the indications of returning day. He is



looking anxiously to the East—the direction whence light appears, and whence the exiles would return to their own land. He is watching for the first ray of morning; the first indication of returning prosperity, and of restored peace for long desolated Jerusalem.

(6.) At this time, and in these circumstances, a voice is heard from Mount Seir, the capital of Idumea. “He,” that is, some one, “calleth unto me out of Seir.” It is the voice of taunting and reproach breaking on the stillness and gloom of the night. ‘Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? What is the prospect? You have watched long. Is there any sign of day? Is there any ray in the East indicating the return of better times? Is your patience still unexhausted, as you watch on during the long night, and amidst the desolate ruins?’

(7.) To this the watchman answers. ‘Yes. There *is* the appearance of day. The morning cometh. There is a ray in the East. I see the prospect of future happier days; of deliverance from the exile; of peace and happiness restored to the desolate land. I see the exiles return; the temple rise in its glory; the city restored to its magnificence; the land studded with villages and covered with vineyards and with flocks. I see the sun of prosperity about to rise; and I see, in the distance, the great Deliverer, as the light and glory of the world.’ ‘But,’ he adds to the taunting Edomite, ‘I see another thing. I see night coming too. I see times of calamity and desolation in the distance. It is not all light; not all prosperity for all people. A long, black, chilly night is to come. It will come upon the land of Idumea. That taunting, scoffing land; that land so hostile to the people of God; that land whose inhabitants cried respecting Jerusalem, Rase it, rase it to the very foundation, shall be enveloped in night, and covered with desolation. On that proud capital, from which the voice of reproach now comes, *Watchman, what of the night?* the shades of a long and gloomy night are yet to settle; a night darker, and more dismal, and of more lengthened shadows than that which has settled upon devoted Jerusalem and Judea.’ ‘Yet,’ adds he, ‘if ye will enquire further, enquire ye.

Do it, and you shall obtain information. *Return, come.* Turn from your taunts and revilings. Come with a humble mind, and even you may partake of the blessings of the light that I see dawning on the darkened land. Even Idumea—the long and bitter foe of God and of his people; Idumea—taunting and scoffing; Idumea, now reviling us for the long night of calamity and wo, may partake of the privileges of the pure religion that shall bless the land in the bright day which begins to dawn in the East.’

Such I take to be the meaning of this brief prophecy. I proceed now, as was proposed,

II. In the second place to exhibit the lessons which it is fitted to teach, or to make a more particular application of it. The application will be to two classes of men, and it will be found to contain important instruction for those who are, and those who are not, the friends of God. With a statement of these lessons my subject will be closed.

(1.) We have, in the prophecy before us, an illustration of the conduct of a taunting and a scoffing world; a world often disposed not to *reason*, but to make *derision* of religion; a world always finding occasions, in some peculiar state of the church, or in some aspect of religion, for the exhibition of irony or scorn. ‘What of the night, watchman? what of the night?’ was the sarcastic and contemptuous language of the bitter foe of Jerusalem, and of the nation that had exulted when it fell. Its ruins; its desolate temple; its dilapidated walls; its grass-grown streets; its broken-down hedges; its wasted fields, were the topic of derision. Carmel, once a fold for flocks, and the splendid plain of Esdraelon, now run over with briars and thorns, and the nation in exile in a distant land, and the lonely and pensive watchman looking long, as was supposed, in vain for the return of day, furnished then the topic of the taunting enquiry.

You will not forget that in the time of this same exile, the feelings of the pious were tried in a similar manner in Babylon. I use their own pensive and beautiful language. “By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us

a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Ps. cxxxvii. 1—4.

"Along the banks where Babel's current flows,  
The captive bands in deep despondence strayed;  
While Zion's fall in sad remembrance rose,  
Her friends, her children mingled with the dead.

The tuneful harp that once with joy they strung,  
When praise employed and mirth inspired their lay  
Was now in silence on the willows hung,  
While growing grief prolonged the tedious day.

Their proud oppressors, to increase their woe,  
With taunting smiles a song of Zion claim;  
Bid sacred praise in strains melodious flow,  
While they blaspheme the great JEHOVAH's name."

Thus too, when they returned again to their own land, and when they recommenced the building of the city and the temple, they furnished a new topic of derision. "What do these feeble Jews?" said their scoffing foes. "Will they fortify themselves? Will they revive the stones out of the rubbish which are burnt? Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." Neh. iv. 2. 4. No one can fail to remember also the manner in which the Redeemer of the world was met, and the scoffs and jeers which he encountered in his life and at his death. When argument failed, how common was it to taunt and revile him! When confuted by reason; when reprov'd by conscience; and when losing their own power and popularity, his foes decked him in the cast-off robes of royalty, and twisted a diadem of thorns around his bleeding brow, and placed a reed in his hand, and made him the sport of the multitude. Even when he was on the cross, they reviled and taunted him. "Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself and come down from the cross." Who ever before or since reviled a sufferer on a cross? Who ever ridiculed a man on the gallows? And where else but in ridiculing religion do men lay aside all the tender and kind feelings of their nature, and insult the miserable, and delight in the anguish of the dying? I need not remind you that in nearly all ages the calamities, and trials, and



hopes, and plans, and efforts of the church have been the subject of derision and merriment by the world. The "Nazarenes" was the name by which they were known in ancient times; and the name of Methodist and Puritan have at different times been used for the same end; until all such names have been made respectable by the virtues of those to whom they were first applied in scorn. I need not remind you that the Lord's supper has been made the subject of merriment; that the Bible has been travestied by infidels; that revivals and missions have been the subject of jesting and of scorn; and that the slender success of the plans of the church for the conversion of the world, have all been met with the spirit of the man crying from Seir, "Watchman, what of the night?" Nor need I remind you of a celebrated prophecy, which has certainly come to pass, whatever may be said of the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel about Babylon, Tyre, or Egypt, "And there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. Such scoffers there have been; such there are; such there will be;—and when they are encountered we should not suppose that any strange thing has happened unto us.

I do not regard this as an age distinguished by any means, for scoffing or reviling on the subject of religion. It may not be an age as distinguished for profound thinking as some others that have passed, for men are too active, and too full of enterprize, to sit down in the closet or the cloister for patient and deliberate thought. Still it is an age when the great mass of men, in this land at least, feel and believe that the subject of religion is to be treated respectfully; that to ridicule the opinions of others is a breach of politeness if of no higher law; an age too when you can usually get a candid hearing for whatever you have to say in favor of evangelical religion, of revivals, and of Christian missions. Scoffers are the exception; they do not give character to the age. They are the few, not the many; the few marked by the breach of the common laws of urbanity no less than by the violation of the laws of heaven.

Yet there are some such:—some who, like the man calling from Mount Seir, are disposed to meet religion



with taunts and reproaches. You may meet such a man occasionally in a stage-coach or a steam-boat—a man as deficient in sound knowledge and good breeding as he is in respect for God ;—for when man loses his respect for his Maker, he at the same time loses his respect for all that is commendable and good. You may sometimes meet a young man—bred to better things, and with early opportunities for becoming useful and respected—who has confounded flippancy with manliness, and mistaken contempt for the opinions of the wise and great, for independence of mind—a young man who begins by torturing the feelings of a sister and a mother ; and who ends, as all such young men will, in the contempt and scorn of all that is good, and in the utter wreck of character ; for when a young man has learned to trifle with the feelings of a sister and a mother, there is no step in the descending scale of infamy which he is not prepared to take.

Lord Shaftesbury, perhaps for the love of paradox, and perhaps to perplex others, held that “ridicule is the test of truth ;” and the enemies of religion have not been slow to act on this precious maxim—a maxim that aided Galileo so much in perfecting the telescope, and Newton in discovering the laws of the universe, and Hervey in discovering the circulation of the blood, and which has been just as valuable in religion as it was in those sciences ! It has lived to our time ; and it is accomplishing just as much for the welfare of men now as it did in the possession of its noble author. How invaluable a maxim for a man who is travelling to eternity ! How easy it is to settle every question about religion and morals ! How sovereign a specific for turning aside the arrows of the king of terrors, and driving away the chills of death, and causing the thunders of justice around the throne of God to sleep, is it to sit down and deride them all ! How easy to be saved, if the only condition of salvation is to revile the sorrows, the joys, the hopes, and the plans of the people of God !

(2.) We have in the response of the watchmen, “The morning cometh,” an illustration of the times of light and prosperity in the church destined to succeed those of calamity. The watchman saw the light in the distant east. He saw the day breaking, and the indications of returning

morning. This, as has already been intimated, included probably two things. (1.) He saw, in vision, the exiles returning to their own land; and, (2.) In the distant future he saw the glory of the church; its splendor and prosperity after the darkness; its glorious Deliverer—the Messiah, and the light from his coming spreading over all the nations of the earth. Future times of glory should succeed the calamities of the seventy years desolation; and a brighter day than any before was yet to dawn upon the world.

Let us, without forcing this unnaturally, endeavor to apply it to some similar circumstances. It is not from direct prophetic vision that we shall do it, but by the application of some of the well-understood principles of the Bible.

We may apply it to the individual Christian in the midst of calamity. To him the morning cometh. “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” Ps. xxx. 5. It is true of every individual Christian that to him, when he is pressed down by calamity and sorrow, the morning cometh. Long he may watch; and “hope deferred may make the heart sick;” and his faith may be ready to faint, but still it is true that to him brighter times will come, and on him the day-star of hope and salvation will arise. Or even should his trials continue till life shall close, and should night follow night full of gloom, still he sees a light above in heaven. Beyond the confines of all this darkness his eye beholds the beams of eternal day; a world where the sun never sets, and where light dwells forever around the throne of God.

“There is a home for weary souls  
By sin and sorrow driven;  
When tossed on life’s tempestuous shoals,  
Where storms arise and ocean rolls,  
And all is drear but heaven.

There, faith lifts up her cheerful eye,  
To brighter prospects given,  
And views the tempest passing by,  
The evening shadows quickly fly  
And all serene in heaven.”

Thus too it is of the church universal. In her darkest hours, it was true that brighter days were to dawn. The

eye of faith could look forward to future periods when the storms of persecution would subside, and the fires of martyrdom would go out. As in the long desolations of wasted Judea, the watchman could look onward, and see the distant day dawn in the east, so it has always been with a persecuted and afflicted church. The shadows would pass away, and a brighter and purer light would rise upon the benighted world. So it is now. We suffer not indeed the evils of persecution. Our land is not, like Judea, laid waste. Our country is not a wilderness, nor are our temples burned up with fire. But there is often not a little in the contentions, and strifes; the ambition, and the crooked policy of portions of the church; the worldly-mindedness and the inconsistencies of its members, to try the faith of those who love Zion, and to give occasion to the taunt of the scoffer, and the raillery of the profane. So too in the enterprize for the conversion of the world. 'What is the prospect of its conversion?' asks the scoffer. 'What advance has been made? Who have been reclaimed from Pagan darkness? What is the character of the converts on heathen ground? How long will it be ere the world is converted at the rate of the present efforts, and the present success?'—There is an answer to all this. As surely as the 'watchman' saw the light in the east rising on desolate Judea, so surely does the eye of faith see the light of salvation rising on a darkened world, and so surely can it be said, 'The morning cometh.' The night of sin is to be succeeded by a long bright day. The shadow of death which for six thousand years has stretched over hill and vale, is to be dissipated by the rising of the Sun of righteousness. Those shadows will roll off from the earth, as you have seen the cloud of dew climb up the mountain side, and waste away as the sun ascended, until all was gone, and his unobstructed beams poured down on the world below.

There is one thing only that is certain in the future history of this world—*its conversion to God and to the true religion*;—and that is as certain as the destruction of Babylon was when Isaiah foretold it; as the ruin of Tyre was when Ezekiel said it would be a barren rock on which the fisherman should dry his net; as the desolation of this same Idumea and Petra was when God said by the pro-



phets, "I will make Mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out, and him that returneth; and I will fill his mountains with his slain men; in thy hills, and in thy vallies, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with the sword. I will make thee perpetual desolations;" "the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it; and thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof; and it shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls;" Ezek. xxxv. 7—9; Isa. xxxiv. 11, 13, 14; as certain as was the destruction of Jerusalem, when the Lord Jesus, sitting on the brow of the Mount of Olives, and looking down on the devoted city, said, "The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee." Luke xix. 43, 44. All this, to the letter, has been fulfilled. With equal clearness God has foretold the conversion of this whole world to himself.—"From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts." Mal. i. 11. "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun." Isa. lix. 19. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Isa. xi. 9. "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, and the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory, and thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God." Isa. lx. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their



heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isa. xxxv. The duration of any existing kingdom or dynasty on earth is unknown; the perpetuity of any splendid commercial capital is unknown; the preservation of any existing civil institutions is a point on which no one of the Burkes and the Canings of the world, with their almost prophetic sagacity, can reason with certainty; but the conversion of this whole world to God is as fixed as his own throne, and constitutes the only landmark that is set up in the future.

(3.) In like manner we have, in the response of the watchman, an illustration of a third important fact—the night of calamity that is coming on a sinful and scoffing world. 'The morning cometh—and—also—the night;' morning, as I understand it, to desolate Jerusalem; night, long and chilly night, to taunting Petra and Idumea. 'I see,' said the watchman, 'I see not only approaching morning, but also approaching night. I see a bright day dawning on the afflicted people of God, but I see, in the distance, also, the dark shades of night. I see the friends of God returning from exile to their now desolate land, and a long career of glory and honor before them. But—I see night for their foes; night for their taunting enemies; night about to settle on Mount Seir and the whole land of Idumea.' And such a night! What is Petra, the once proud capital of Idumea, now? A city of tombs; a sepulchre of the dead. True, its theatre and its temples are there engraved in the eternal rock; its dwellings are there, sculptured with all the skill of ancient art. But it is solitary and still. Ages rolled by, when to the civilized and the Christian world its very site was unknown. It was hidden in the towering rocks; and a night of centuries, unbroken by one ray of civilization or prosperity, has rested upon the whole land of Idumea. The foot of the traveller has indeed once more passed through Idumea, and to Petra. The wayfaring man has gone from a Christian land; and what has he found? He has found a city of the dead; a place of tombs; a desolate capital of a desolate land, as Ezekiel and Isaiah, two thousand five hundred years ago, said it

would be. He has found no dweller there ; he sees no living human being but the wandering Arab stealing along among the habitations of untenanted Petra, and claiming the desolation as his own. "I would," said our own countryman, Stephens, when there, "I would that the sceptic could stand, as I did, among the ruins of this city among the rocks, and there open the sacred book, and read the words of the inspired penman, written when this desolate place was one of the greatest cities in the world. I see the scoff arrested, his cheek pale, his lips quivering, and his heart quaking with fear, as the ruined city cries out to him in a voice loud and powerful as that of one risen from the dead ; though he would not believe Moses and the prophets, he believes the hand-writing of God himself in the desolation and eternal ruin around him."\*

Now, in this night of desolation and ruin, we have an illustration of the night that is yet to come on a sinful and scoffing world. What a place of prosperity and splendor—the thoroughfare, the emporium of the commerce of the East—was once that proud city ! To what magnificence did it arise ! Yet what a fall ! What a night ! Thus night is soon to settle on guilty and scoffing man—the night of death. It comes—how chilly ; how gloomy ; how long ! No matter what the pride, and wealth, and talent of the scoffer ; no matter what his rank or his standing ; yet to him the night approaches, and he must die. A few more days of prosperity will end all ; and the tongue of the profane man and of the scoffer will be silent in the grave. Young man, or aged ! If a scoffer ; if a reviler of God ; if a taunter of father, or mother, or sister, for being a Christian ; if a reviler of the church, or of the church's Redeemer, I apprise you that the day of taunting and reviling will soon cease. I apprise you that there will be no raillery or reviling in the grave, or at the bar of God ; and I remind you that it is equally odious and wicked here. Listen, one moment, to an extract from what the leader of modern infidels—shame that the immortal mind has ever acknowledged such a leader—

\* Travels in Arabia, Egypt, &c. vol. ii. 76.

has called "Solomon's jest-book."—"Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." Prov. i. 24, 25.

Thus too, a dark night of calamity and storm shall come not only upon the individual scoffer, but upon the whole wicked world. The morning of glory will dawn on the church redeemed; destruction fearful and awful as in that solemn night when the angel of death went through the tents of Sennacherib, shall come; and the guilty shall be doomed to woe. On all the wicked the night of destruction comes, as certainly as destruction impended over Petra, and Babylon, and Tyre, and Jerusalem, when the prophets and the Saviour looked far into future times, and told what they would be. The same prophetic eye has looked on the future doom of guilty man; and the same voice that with such fearful certainty told what Jerusalem would be, has said "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." The same Spirit of inspiration that indited the prophecy respecting Dumah, has also caused to be recorded these words: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Pet. iii. 10. So certain as desolation reigns where once was proud and guilty Babylon; so certain as Petra is a lonely city of the dead; so certain as Tyre is a solitary place where the fisherman spreads his net, so sure is it that fire and flame will spread over the hills and vales of the earth, and that final and irremediable destruction from the presence of Jehovah shall come upon the guilty. God said of Dumah, (Isa. xxxiv. 5. 4. 8.) "My sword shall rush as if intoxicated [with wrath] from heaven; behold it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse to judgment. And all the hosts of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; for



it is the day of the Lord's vengeance."\* So his vengeance shall come upon a guilty world; and so beneath his uplifted arm the wicked shall die.

(4.) There remains one other idea on which, in conclusion, I may make a remark. The thought occurs in that part of my text, "If ye will enquire, enquire ye; return; come." That is, if *you*—the despiser and the scoffer—will enquire in an humble manner; if you will come with proper reverence and respect, and will turn from your sins, it may be done. Light will stream also along your path; and the sun of prosperity will ride up your sky, and will pour down his noontide radiance upon you also. The man who ridicules religion; he who travesties the Bible; he who makes the new birth, the atonement, and the promise of heaven the subject of merriment; he who derides the piety of a sister and the solicitude of a mother for his salvation; he who laughs at the efforts of Christians to convert the world; and he who makes a mockery of death and the judgment, even *he* may learn the way to life, and partake of the much-despised blessings of pardon and salvation. If he will forsake the ways of derision; if he will enquire on this subject in a manner appropriate to its importance; if with a candid, humble, docile mind, he will approach the oracles of God, light shall break in upon *his* mind, and the beams of an eternal morning find their way to his heart. "The meek will God guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." But who *can* instruct a scoffer? Who can teach that young man who is already too wise to be taught even by the God that made him? Who can instruct him who is too wise to enquire; him who lives to deride sacred things; him who lives to make a jest of death and a mockery of the judgment? I pity the scoffer.—I have no deeper compassion for any one of the misguided sons of mortality than I have for that ill-informed and misdirected young man who is too wise to learn where Newton learned, and too proud to bow where Bacon bowed his mighty mind;—for that unhappy and wretched man—standing over the grave, and near the bar of Almighty God, who lives to make derision of

\* For the propriety of this translation, I may be permitted, perhaps, to refer the reader to my Notes on Isaiah on this place.



the agony of the Saviour, to mock his Maker on his throne, and to scoff at the God who keeps him out of hell ! Do I address such an one ? \* Let me tell you, there is neither wisdom, nor wit, nor talent in this. It secures the approbation of no one whose good opinion is of value. It will secure not your own approbation when you die. It will plant daggers in your dying pillow. Let me remind you that life is not lengthened out by a jeer ; that the shades of the chilly night roll on towards you while you laugh ; that to ridicule religion alleviates none of the agonies of dying and the terrors of the judgment seat, and that the flames of hell are not made a thing of nought by a jibe. Let me tell you, in the spirit of my text—that serious, sober, humble, prayerful enquiry on the subject of religion, will conduct to the favor of God and to heaven ;—any other spirit leads down to the dark shades of eternal death ! Do you then say to me, ‘ Watchman, what of the night ? Watchman, what of the night ? ’ I reply, the morning cometh to the church redeemed ;—the glad morning of deliverance to the afflicted Christian, and the morning of the resurrection and of eternal glory to all who bear the image and the name of the Son of God :—and also night cometh to the scoffing sinner—the chilly night of death—the night of wo eternal to all who deride, despise, or neglect religion. If ye will enquire further, it may be done. Even now return to the Lord with a humble, penitent, and believing heart, and he will be found of you ; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon. Isa. lv. 7.

## SERMON XXIII.

### THE HARVEST PAST.

Jeremiah viii. 20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

MAN is placed upon the earth that he may prepare for eternity. His errand in this world is not to gain its wealth, to secure its honors, or to taste its pleasures. He has time enough to prepare well for a boundless existence, but he has none to lose; he may make each hour send an influence ever onward into the interminable duration before him, but if it is suffered to pass by unimproved it cannot be recalled; he may make the whole of life a probation, but he can convert no part of eternity into a preparation for what is beyond. As a season of preparation for eternity, life may be regarded as sustaining the same relation which spring and summer do to the harvest. There is a time to plow and sow, and there is an appropriate time for the harvest, and if these are neglected, a gloomy winter sets in when there can be no sowing, and when it will be *too late* to secure a harvest. There are favorable seasons in life to secure salvation. They are, one after another, fast passing away. When gone they cannot be recalled; and the favorable influence which might have been secured to bear on our future being is gone forever. We can no more recall it than the farmer can command the sun of spring-time to rise again, or the showers and dews of summer to come down in the dreary winter. The opportunity of salvation will have passed away forever.

These truths I wish now to illustrate, by employing the text with the same design with which it was first used in reference to the Jews. There *was* a time when they might have obtained the favor of God; a time, when, if they had listened to his voice by the prophets,

their temple, and city, and nation might have been spared. But it was now *too late*. That time had passed away, and could not be recalled. The forbearance of God was exhausted, and their beautiful house of worship, their city, and their land were to be given up to destruction.

In illustrating the subject before us, I shall submit to you a series of propositions which will at once command your assent, and which, I trust, will lead to the conclusion to which I desire to conduct you, that no time is to be lost in securing the salvation of the soul.

I. Life is made up of a series of probations. Its various parts are favorable periods for affecting the future. The present may be so used as to be of *advantage* to us hereafter. From the present we may send an influence forward that shall meet us in time to come, and that shall be worth to us there more than all which it cost us.

These various modes of expressing the thought mean substantially the same thing, and are repeated only that there may be no possibility of misunderstanding the import of the proposition. A few illustrations will make this general truth plain.

(1.) Life is a probation in regard to the friendship and favor of our fellow-men. We do not at once step into their confidence without a trial. There is no original presumption in regard to our character, our learning, our talents, our capacity for business, which will secure us the confidence of others without trial. There may be no presumption *against* us except that which always exists in relation to the depraved tendencies of a fallen nature, but there is none *in our favor* which can be used as *capital* with which to claim their confidence. Even when there are all the advantages of birth, and blood; of hereditary honor, patriotism, or talent, the world demands of *us* evidence that we are worthy of its confidence before that confidence is bestowed. The favors which it has to confer, are reserved for those who shall evince in suitable circumstances that they are worthy of the trust, and that they have endowments which will fit them for the performance of the duties to be discharged. It is in this way only that we can secure a reputation for commercial integrity or professional ability; that we can

gain an office in the state that may be of value to us, or the friendship of the wise and good ; or that we can lay the foundation for lasting usefulness or fame. Many a man thus toils through a long and weary life to secure by his good conduct something which his fellow-men have to bestow in the shape of honor or office, content at last, if even when gray hairs are thick upon him, he may lay his hand on the prize which has glittered before him in all the journey of life.

(2.) Especially is this true of the young. Of no young man is it *presumed* that he is qualified for office, or business, or friendship, until he has given evidence of such qualification. I have found in my own experience, and as far as my observation has extended, have seen that the world is kindly disposed toward young men, and that there are no interests so dear that men are not willing to commit them to their hands when they are satisfied that they are qualified to defend them, and to transmit them to future times. All the blood-bought blessings of liberty ; all the endowments of colleges and schools ; all the offices of the state, and all the interests of religion and benevolence, they are willing to entrust to the young as soon as they have evidence that those interests will be safe in their hands ; and then, those who have bled, and toiled, and labored hardest for these things, and who have prized them most, will lie calmly down and die ! But they demand *evidence* that the young are qualified for the trust before it is committed to their hands ; nor will the chairs of the presidents and professors in our seminaries of learning ; nor the seats of senators or judges ; nor the pulpits or the executive offices of the land, be confided to the young until by their lives they have convinced those who hold them at their disposal that they are worthy of the great and momentous trust.

(3.) The study of a profession, or apprenticeship, is such a probation. It is just a trial to determine whether the young man will be worthy of the confidence which he desires, and it will decide the amount of honor or success which the world will give him. The world is keen-eyed in regard to this ; much more so than most young men are aware. There is an eye of public vigilance on every young man from which he cannot escape. The world



watches his movements; learns his character; marks his defects; records and remembers his virtues. There is an arrangement in the course of events that will determine his future life in accordance with the character which he has formed, and from which he cannot escape. There is an unseen, but withering influence that attends a young man that is idle, dissipated, or unprincipled, that will go with him, like an evil genius, to distant climes; that will cross oceans with him, and start up to meet him in polar snows or on barren sands; that will stand in his way every where, and that he cannot escape. And there is a happy influence, of more value than the fabled genius of Socrates, which will go with every young man, who, by industry and early virtue, has shown himself worthy the confidence of mankind, and which will attend him around the world.

(4.) The whole of this probation for the future often depends on some single action that shall determine the character, and that shall send an influence ever onward. Every thing seems to be concentrated on a single point. A right or a wrong decision then settles every thing. The moment when in the battle at Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington could say, "This will do," decided the fate of the battle, and of kingdoms. A wrong movement just at that point might have changed the condition of the world for centuries. In every man's life there are such periods; and probably in the lives of most men their future course is more certainly determined by one such far-reaching and central decision, than by many actions in other circumstances. They are those moments when honor, wealth, usefulness, health, and salvation seem all to depend on a single resolution. It seems to be a small matter for a young man to deliberate whether he shall or shall not partake of a social glass of intoxicating drink with a friend; and yet on the result of such a deliberation has depended the whole career of many a man. So it may seem a small matter for him to visit a gambling-room, or a theatre once; or to form a friendship with some well-introduced and genteel looking stranger; and yet the whole of his future destiny may depend on the decision of that moment. The reason is this. It is the crisis of the life. It settles a principle. It determines

whether he will listen to the voice of reason and conscience; to parental counsel and to God, or whether he is to be under the control of passion and appetite. Every thing is concentrated on that point—like one of Napoleon's movements at the bridge of Lodi, or at Austerlitz. If that one point is carried, the whole field may soon be won. In the decision which a young man often makes at that point, there is such a breach made on his virtuous principles; there is such an array of temptations pouring into the breach—like an army pouring into a city when a breach is made in a wall—that henceforward there is almost no resistance, and the citadel is taken. Of all those who have become the victims of intemperance, it would be found, probably, that the mischief was done at some such decisive moment in their lives; and of those who have lived honored and useful lives, it might also be found that their whole career was determined by some single act of decided resistance to temptation.

II. My second general remark is, that when a time of probation is passed, *it cannot be recalled*. If it has been improved aright, the advantages which it conferred in shaping the future life, will abide; if it has been misimproved or abused, it will be too late to repair the evil. At no subsequent period can the advantages be secured which might have been secured then. This principle is so plain that it will be admitted to be true without an attempt to prove it. An illustration or two will prepare us for the use which I intend to make of it.

A young man is fitting for a profession, or for commercial life. If he suffers the time usually allotted to such a preparation to pass away in idleness or vice, it will soon be too late to recall his neglected or wasted opportunities. There are advantages in preparing for a profession in youth, which cannot be secured at a subsequent period of life. A young man is professedly acquiring an education. If he suffers the time of youth to be spent in indolence, the period will soon arrive when it will be too late for him to repair the evil. In the acquisition of languages; in the formation of industrious habits; in cultivating an acquaintance with past events, he has opportunities then which can be secured at no other time of life. At no future period can he do what

he was fitted to do then, and what ought to have been done then. Whatever opportunities there were then to prepare for the future, are now lost, and it is too late to recall them. The period has passed away, and all that follows must be unavailing regret. We cannot roll the wheels of time backward. We cannot return and travel over the journey anew. We cannot place ourselves in the past where we now see that we missed the way, and direct our steps in the right path. Seldom does a man find gray hairs admonishing him that life is soon to end, without having occasion to recall many such neglected opportunities; many abused privileges; much wasted time and talent, and no small part of the lives of old men is filled with regrets at the remembrance of such abused mercies.

It may seem like a digression from my main design, but I cannot here withhold a remark on the amount of abused and wasted talent every where in the world. I advert to it to call the attention of the young to what they may soon have occasion to regret with tears. It is the fact that so much time is squandered, and so many opportunities neglected, where a happy influence *might* be sent forward to future years, but where preparations are now making only for a harvest of woes. "What a fool you are, Paley," said a young man in a British university, "to be wasting your time in idleness and dissipation. You have talents which might raise you to eminence. I have none; and it is of no consequence how I act." Paley took the hint, though roughly made, and rose like a clear light, and shed a lustre on the age and the literature of his nation, and England boasts no son of greater acuteness, perhaps none of wider influence than he. Let any one with the recollections of his own wasted hours, and with any just views of the value of time, look over this or any other city or land, and he cannot do it but with emotions of unutterable sorrow. In all our cities, towns, and villages; in even our colleges and schools, there is talent that is now buried, ruined, wasted: that is now, and that is to be in this world and the next a blighting and a curse, that might adorn the bar, the senate, or the pulpit; that might resist with success the evils of profligacy and infidelity, and that might bear every blessing of science and civilization around the



globe. From those lips which now give utterance to horrid blasphemy, the gospel "in strains as sweet as angels use," might "whisper peace;" and those frames now hastening to the dishonored grave of the drunkard, might endure the cold of northern climes, or the heat of Arabian deserts, in diffusing the blessings of civilization and Christianity; and those hands that will soon tremble as if palsied by age under the influence of intoxicating drinks, might make the wilderness and the solitary place glad, and the desert blossom as the rose. All that we would ask to secure the conversion of this whole world to virtue, would be merely the talent that is now preparing to be a blighting and a curse. Soon to that mass of expanding youthful intellect the opportunity of preparing for future usefulness will have passed away; and it will be too late to prepare to accomplish any thing for the welfare of mankind. I need not pause here to remark on the painful emotions which visit the bosom in the few cases of those who are reformed after a wasted and dissipated youth. Cases of such reformation *sometimes* occur. A man after the errors and follies of a dissipated early life; after he has wasted the opportunities which he had to obtain an education; after all the abused care and anxiety of a parent to prepare him for future usefulness and happiness, *sometimes* is aroused to see the error and folly of his course. What would he not give to be able to retrace that course, and to live over again that abused and wasted life! But it is TOO LATE. The die is cast for this life—whatever may be the case in regard to the life to come.

III. The general propositions which I have endeavored to illustrate, are true in a much more important sense in regard to religion. The proposition, as applicable to religion, is, that there are favorable seasons for securing the salvation of the soul, which if suffered to pass away unimproved, cannot be recalled. There are times in the life of each individual which may be regarded as the "summer," or the "harvest," in reference to salvation; and which, if suffered to pass away unimproved, will leave the mind to unavailing regret that it is now *too late*. The grand purpose, as I have already remarked, for which God has placed us on earth, is to prepare for what is be-



yond the grave. It is not to obtain wealth, or to acquire honor, or to enjoy pleasure here; it is to prepare for the world beyond. This could be easily shown did my subject call for it, or were it a proposition that would be likely to be disputed. One consideration is enough now. It is, that all the honors, and wealth, and learning, and worldly happiness which man CAN gain, are wholly disproportionate to the vast powers with which God has endowed us. They leave a "void," an impression which we can never get rid of, that we were made for a higher and nobler purpose. It would be unlike God to create such vast powers for so unworthy ends; and men must, and will, and should look forward to the retributions of another state. On the same principle, therefore, on which he has made future character and happiness in this life dependent on our conduct in those seasons which are times of probation, has he made *all* the eternity of our existence dependent on the conduct of life regarded as a season of probation. And on the same principle on which he has appointed favorable seasons for sowing and reaping, he has appointed favorable seasons to secure our salvation. For it is no more to be presumed of any man without trial that he is prepared for heaven, than it is that a young man will be a good merchant, lawyer, or physician, without trial.

There are periods, therefore, which God has appointed as favorable seasons for salvation; times when there are peculiar advantages for securing religion, and which will not occur again. There are advantages in regard to salvation at those periods of life which can be found at no other period; seasons of favorable influence which may be called the "summer," and the "harvest time," for becoming Christians, which can be secured at no other period of life. If the advantages of such seasons be suffered to pass away unimproved, they cannot be recalled, nor can they be secured at any other period, any more than the youth who has been idle while he should have been preparing for future life, can ever find the same advantages again. Let us, at this stage of our remarks, look at some of those seasons.

Foremost among them is YOUTH—the most favorable time always for becoming a Christian. Then the heart is tender, and the conscience is easily impressed, and the

mind is more free from cares than at a future period, and there is less difficulty in breaking away from the world, and usually less dread of the ridicule of others. Then numerous promises in the Bible meet us, assuring us that God loves those that love him, and that they who seek him early shall find him. No peculiar promise is made to man in middle life, or in old age. The time of youth compared with old age has about the same relation to salvation, which spring-time and summer compared with winter, have with reference to a harvest. The chills and frosts of age are about as unfavorable to conversion to God as the frosts and snows of December are to the cultivation of the earth. He who suffers the time of youth to pass by intending to become a Christian when he is old, is acting in about the same way in which he would act, who should suffer the genial suns of April, and May, and June to pass by, and should intend to strike his plough in the soil when stern winter throws his icy chains over streams and fields, and when the whole earth has become like a hard rock. The great mass of those who are saved, are converted in early life; and when that season passes away, it is like the passing away of spring and summer in reference to the harvest. At no future period of life can you find the same advantages for becoming a Christian. You *may* live many years; and in future life I do not deny that you *may* find some advantages for becoming religious, and I do not deny that you *may* then become a Christian. But whatever there was in that season that was peculiarly favorable will return no more, and can be found no where else. And when you have stepped over the limits of youth unconverted, you have gone beyond the most favorable time you can ever have for preparing for heaven. But suppose that youth is to be *all* of your life, and you were to die before you reached middle life, what then will be your doom?

A season when your mind is awakened to the subject of religion, is such a favorable time for salvation. All persons experience such seasons; times when there is an unusual impression of the vanity of the world, of the evil of sin, of the need of a Saviour, and of the importance of being prepared for heaven. These are times of mercy, when God is speaking to the soul. All men, I

say, experience them. They do not occur, indeed, often in political excitements ; in the pressure of business ; in the struggles of ambition ; or amidst the dense throng that is crowding on for gain or honor. But they occur when those stormy scenes are lulled to repose, or in the intervals when the mind is turned away from them ; in the evening, when weary and sad, you come home to the quiet of the family ; in the stillness of the Sabbath, when the thoughts are turned to the world of rest ; in the sanctuary, when the words of the gospel drop like the rain, and distil like the dew ; in the moments of calm retrospection, when a man sits down to think over the past, and when he cannot but think of the life to come ; on the bed of sickness, when he is shut out from the world, and in those moments when he thinks, he scarcely knows why, of the grave, of judgment, of eternity. Those are 'summer' suns in regard to salvation. Compared with the agitations and strifes of public life, they are with reference to salvation what gentle summer suns are to the husbandman, compared with the storm and tempest when the lightnings flash, and the hail beats down the harvest which he had hoped to reap. And the farmer may as well expect to till his soil, and sow and reap his harvest, when the black cloud rolls up the sky, and the pelting storm drives on, as a man expect to prepare for heaven in the din of business, in political conflicts, and in the struggles of gain and ambition. But all—all that is favorable for salvation, in such serious moments, will soon pass away, and when gone they cannot be recalled. They are favorable moments, sent by a merciful God, to recall you from the world, and to prepare you for heaven. Improved, they are like the summer sun in reference to the harvest. Lost, or neglected, they are like the passing away of spring, when not a furrow has been turned, or a seed sown.

A revival of religion, in like manner, is a favorable time for securing salvation. There are influences on your heart when others are pressing into the kingdom, which exist at no other period of your life. It is a time when there is all the power of the appeal from sympathy ; all the force of the fact that your companions and friends are leaving you for heaven ; when the strong ties of love



for them draw your mind towards religion ; when all the confidence which you had in them becomes an argument for religion ; and when, most of all, the Holy Spirit makes your heart tender, and speaks with any unusual power to the soul. But such a time, with all its advantages, usually soon passes away ; and those advantages for salvation you cannot again create, or recall—any more than you can call up the bloom of spring in the snows of December.

I might, were there time, go on to say, that there are advantages for becoming a Christian when on a bed of sickness ; or when in a pious family ; or when you fall in with a pious stranger ; or when you are sitting in the sanctuary ; or when some truth powerfully arrests your attention. All these, and all kindred seasons, are the “summer” and the “harvest” of salvation ; and all constitute a part of our probation with reference to the world to come. What advantages a youth has for becoming a Christian, who has a pious father and mother ; for whom prayer is daily offered at the family altar, and for whom a parent feels the deepest solicitude that he should be saved ! What advantage a young person has in the Sabbath-school for becoming a Christian, whose teacher seeks to guide him in the paths of salvation !—They are “summer” suns in regard to eternal life, and they furnish advantages which can no where else be found.

But all these will soon, O, how soon, be gone. Life will soon be all travelled over. Not one of these advantages can be recalled. Gone will be every Sabbath ; gone every season of instruction in the family and the Sabbath-school. You will soon have listened to the last sermon, and the last admonition of a friend. You will soon have passed through the season of youth, and then of middle life, and then of decrepid age. You will soon have felt the last strivings of the Spirit, and witnessed the last revival of religion. You will soon have seen the communion administered for the last time, and heard your pastor offer the last prayer for your salvation. Every favorable circumstance for preparing for heaven in youth ; in the Sabbath-school ; in the sanctuary ; in your own feelings, and in the efforts of your friends, will soon have passed away ; and not all the gold of Ophir could buy



their return, even for a moment. The "harvest will have passed, and the summer ended"—whether you are, or are not saved.

Could man retrace his steps, and repair his follies, life would be a different thing. But the journey of life is like that of a man who is passing through a land full of diamonds and gold, to be traversed but once—and where they diminish in beauty, in number, and in value, every step he takes. What if he should pass all over that journey and not have gathered a diamond or a particle of gold—amused by the warbling of birds, or led by some 'Jack o' lantern' that danced along his path? Thus travels man over the journey of life, charmed by some trifle that turns off the mind from its great object, until life is ended, the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and the soul is not saved. The harp, the song and the dance allured the youth; business and ambition controlled the man; the love of honor and of gain drove away every serious thought; the Sabbath came and went; years rolled on, and he has come to the end of the busy, the gay, the unsatisfactory journey, and it is now *too late*, and he dies without hope. Every favorable influence for salvation has been neglected or abused; and he goes up the untrodden way to God, saying 'the harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and I am not saved.'

IV. The unpardoned sinner dies. Let us, in conclusion, look a moment at the various classes who will utter this unavailing lamentation, and the reflections of the soul, as it goes unforgiven up to God.

Such words will be uttered by the aged man who has suffered his long life to pass away without preparation to meet his Judge. He has seen many days. He has spent a long, and perhaps a pleasant "summer" of life. He may have risen high in wealth and honor. He may have been entrusted with important offices, and have been eminent for talent. He may have gained all that he hoped when he began life, and all that this world can furnish to its votaries. He may have been favored with all the means of grace; nay, he may have been not an inattentive hearer of the gospel. But his long life is closing. His summer is ended, and he is not saved. With all

that he has gained, he has failed to acquire the one thing which alone now would be useful to him. He has lived to slight the offers of mercy from year to year, and now as he goes to eternity he can only take up the lamentation, "the harvest is passed, and I am not saved."

The language of the text will be uttered at last by the man who often resolved to attend to the subject of religion, but who deferred it until it was too late. He was a professed believer in the truth of religion, and he *intended* to be a Christian. He read much, and thought much, and often resolved to defer it but little longer. At twenty, at thirty, at forty, at fifty years of life he resolved that if he lived a little longer he would become a Christian. When a youth he resolved that he would attend to it, should he become settled in life. He became settled, but was burdened with unexpected cares, and resolved then to seek religion at some future period. At one time he resolved that he would be a Christian should he be afflicted. God laid him on a bed of pain, and he found then, what he had often been told in vain, that a sick-bed was a poor place to prepare to die; and then he promised in solemn covenant with God that if he were spared he would lead a different life. He was restored, and as before forgot his promise. Life with him has been but little else than a series of unfulfilled resolutions to be a Christian. Every resolution has failed; and at the end of life, it remains only for him to say, "the summer is ended, and I am not saved."

These words will be uttered by the thoughtless and the gay. Life to them has been a summer scene in more senses than one. It has been—or they have tried to make it so—just what a summer day is to the gaudy insects that you see playing in the rays of the setting sun. It has been just as volatile, as frivolous, as useless. In regard to the great purpose for which God made them immortal, and placed them in the world when his Son died for sin, they have accomplished just as much as the insect does that spends its little day in playing in the sun-beams. At no time could they be persuaded that the gay summer of fashion would pass away; or that the chill November of retribution would come at last; or that these glittering scenes of life must ever be left; or

that they had any more important business in living than could be found in dress and amusement. But the time has come at last, when all this gaiety and vanity is to be left. The beautiful summer, that seemed so full of flowers and sweet odors, passes away. The sun of life hastens to its setting. The circle of fashion has been visited for the last time; the theatre has been entered for the last time; the pleasures of the ball-room have been enjoyed for the last time; music has poured its last notes on the ear, and the last silvery tones of flattery are dying away, and now has come the serious hour to die. The gay summer is ended, and as the soul leaves the body these disregarded words will come to remembrance, "the harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and I am not saved."

Thus too it will be with him whose mind was often serious; with him who not seldom witnessed a revival of religion; with him who was trained in a pious family, and who always meant to be a Christian; with him who was half convinced, and who began to break off his sins; with him who was admonished by a dying parent to be prepared to meet him in heaven, and who meant to be thus prepared; with all that vast throng of all ages and characters who are placed on earth to prepare for heaven, who miss the great errand of their being, and who come to the close of life having really done nothing for their salvation. Those opportunities will all soon be gone to return no more. That dying father will speak to you no more; that departing mother will entreat you no more to be prepared for heaven; and at the end of all, the lamentation will be, 'the summer is ended, and I am not saved.'

With not a few here, it is not improbable, life will close in this manner. When too late you will remember the interesting invitations of the gospel, and your solemn resolutions. You will remember the sanctuary, the Sabbath, the Sabbath-school teacher, the pastor. You will remember the times when you were serious, and when you were half resolved to be a Christian. You will remember your life of gaiety, or vice; your days when you sought pleasure, and when for the baubles of this life you jeopardized your soul's salvation.

At the close of all you will say, 'It is ended, and I am not saved. I have trod life's flowery way, and the jour-



ney is over, and I am not saved. I have visited the house of God, and been entreated to attend to my soul; but I am now to go there no more, and I am not saved. I have climbed the steep of ambition, and I have sought for honor, and all that struggling is over, and I am not saved. I have mingled in the gay circles of life, and all that is ended, and I am not saved. I have ranged the fields of pleasure, and trod along the flowery streams of life, and my rambles are ended, and I am not saved. I have resolved, and re-resolved to be a Christian, and all is now over, and I am not saved. I have crossed oceans, and visited other lands, and now am about to embark on the ocean of eternity, and visit an undiscovered country from which I am not to return, but I am not saved. Closed is the summer of life; ceased is the voice of friendly admonition; gone are my opportunities of salvation; youth, strength, conviction for sin, the Sabbath, the privileges of the sanctuary, all are passed away, and I am not saved.'

O, on how many beds of death is this language heard! O, how many an unpardoned spirit goes up to God, saying, 'the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved!' What are the sighings of despair but the lamentation, 'the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved?' Sinner, the 'summer' is passing away; youth is hastening to manhood; and manhood is hastening to the grave. Sabbaths are hastening away, and privileges are hastening away, and soon, O how soon, may your lips on a dying bed take up the lamentation, 'the harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and I am not saved.'

THE END.





Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.  
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date: May 2006

**PreservationTechnologies**

A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive  
Cranberry Township, PA 16066  
(724) 779-2111



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 009 142 588 9

